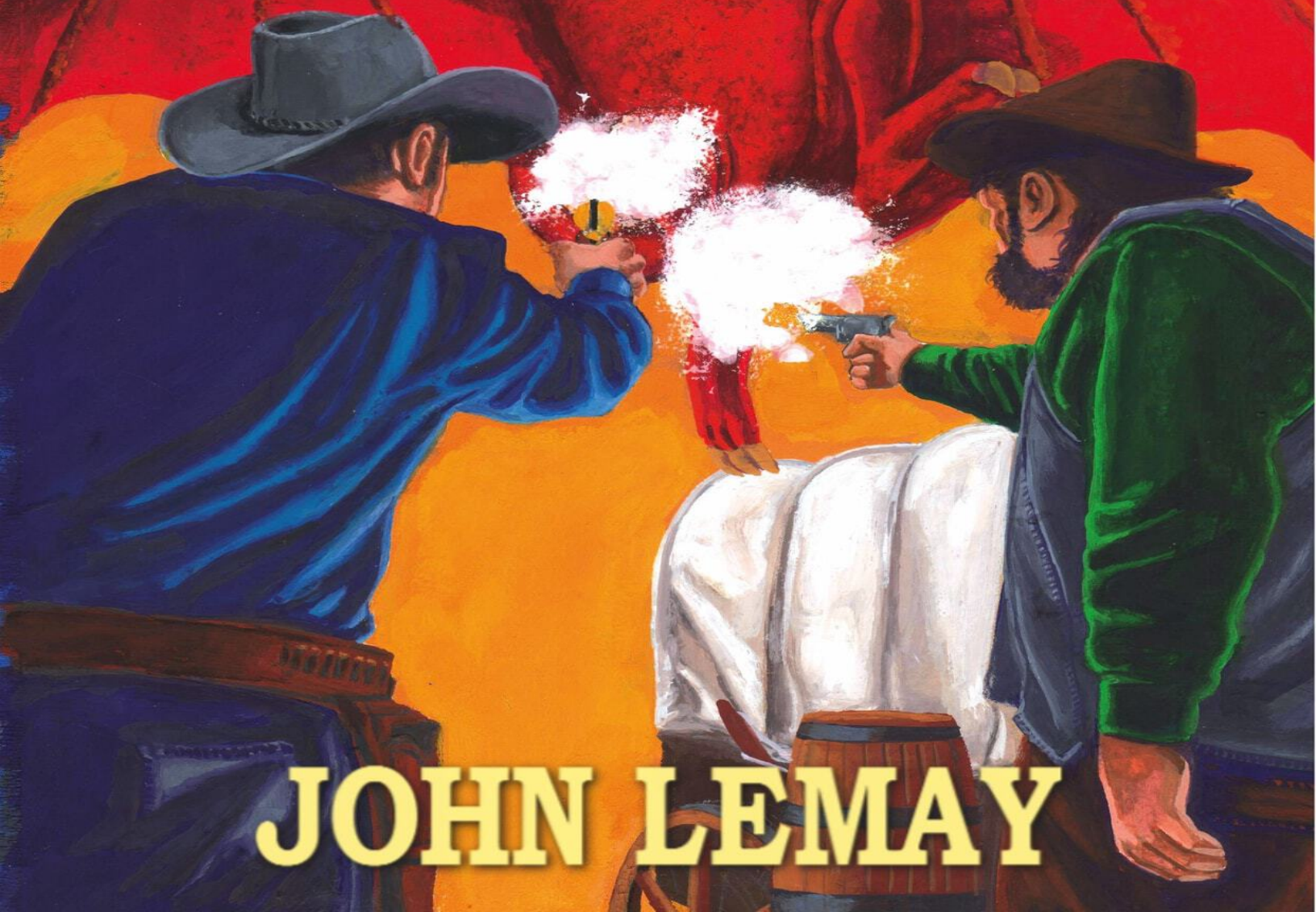


COWBOYS & SAURIANS

DINOSAURS AND PREHISTORIC BEASTS AS SEEN BY THE PIONEERS

*TRUE TALES OF
PREHISTORIC PERIL
FROM THE PIONEER PERIOD!*



JOHN LEMAY

COWBOYS & SAURIANS

*DINOSAURS AND PREHISTORIC BEASTS AS
SEEN BY THE PIONEERS*

By John LeMay

Bicep Books
Roswell, NM

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FOR NOE TORRES

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

cowboy noun cow·boy | \ 'kaʊ-, bɔɪ | *a man, typically one on horseback, who herds and tends cattle, especially in the western US and as represented in westerns and novels. “They are always playing cowboys and Indians.”*

saurian noun sau·ri·an | \ 'sɔr-ē-ən | *any of a suborder (Sauria) of reptiles including the lizards and in older classifications the crocodiles and various extinct forms (such as the dinosaurs and ichthyosaurs) that resemble lizards.*

PREFACE

TITLES CAN BE TRICKY. As an author, you want to come up with something catchy that grabs the attention of a potential reader. You also want it to be specific enough that it's accurate, but not so specific that it's too long. To compromise, I decided to give this book a simple title with a fairly lengthy subtitle, that being *Cowboys & Saurians: Dinosaurs and Prehistoric Beasts as Seen by the Pioneers*. The main title is a nod to a similar tome I co-authored with Noe Torres entitled *The Real Cowboys and Aliens: UFO Encounters of the Old West*. The book you now read is a quasi-sequel to that work, which explored real newspaper accounts from the Pioneer Period that detailed UFO encounters such as the Aurora, TX, UFO crash of 1897.^[1]

You may also notice this book was entitled “Cowboys & Saurians” rather than “Cowboys & Dinosaurs”. This is because paleontological purists will no doubt point out that some of the giant reptiles in this book aren't actually, technically dinosaurs. A horrible offense, I know. But let's face it, to the general public any prehistoric giant reptile is basically a dinosaur. Hence Saurians, which can encompass a wide variety of reptiles as opposed to dinosaurs, even if most of the creatures in the book are dinosaurian.

Furthermore, along the line of specifics, this book isn't really just about Cowboys who encountered dinosaurs. It's also about non-cowboy/general folk who encountered dinosaurs during the Pioneer Period, such as a story about a carnivorous theropod from Ohio in the mid-1800s. No cowboys there, but technically it was the Pioneer Period (roughly considered from 1870-1914).

So in closing, rather than calling this book “Cowboys, Native Americans, Fur Trappers, Miners and Common Folk from the Old Days Encounter Dinosaurs and Other Prehistoric Animals That Should Have Been Dead By Then” I hope you'll forgive my simplistic title of *Cowboys & Saurians*, I feel it gets the idea across.

THE AUTHOR

JOHN P. LEMAY
Roswell, New Mexico.
July 2019.



INTRODUCTION

REMNANT DINOSAURS

IF YOU'RE AN EXPERIENCED armchair cryptozoologist by now, you might as well skip this chapter. You know all about *Mokele-mbembe*, Champ and the coelacanth just like I do. However, there are probably a lot of other casual readers out there, either fans of dinosaurs or the Old West, who picked up this book that aren't as familiar with the concept of remnant dinosaurs outside of the Loch Ness Monster.

Loch Ness is probably as good a place as any to begin talking about remnant dinosaurs. As many of you have heard, Nessie is allegedly a surviving plesiosaurus.^[2] It is commonly depicted (and sometimes photographed) as a long-necked dinosaur with flippers that matches the description of a plesiosaur. We won't even get into the how's and the why's as to how a cold-blooded reptile could survive in a very cold lake many years after it was supposed to have gone extinct.^[3] That issue aside, the sheer multitude of sightings lend credence to the possibility that there is indeed something in the water. Nessie isn't the only dinosaurian lake monster, there is also Champ in Lake Champlain in the U.S., and Ogopogo in Lake Okanagan in Canada to name only two. Overall, these prehistoric survivors are some of the most sighted cryptids^[4] in the world.

Almost as common today as the plesiosaur family is the pteranodon family, which are sighted frequently (or, frequently as far as these sort of things go) in the skies. These creatures are seen nearly everywhere, from Texas to Africa. And, on the subject of pterosaurs and plesiosaurs, this is probably as good a place as any to reassure you paleontological purists that yes, I do know these two ancient reptiles are not true dinosaurs. Technically they fall into the family of prehistoric reptiles. But, as I said in the preface, most common folk (like me) consider them dinosaurs.^[5]

With that said, the best known *true* remnant dinosaur is the Congo's brontosaurus, *Mokele-mbembe*.^[6] Reports of dinosaurs in Africa in the western hemisphere first sprang up thanks to a newspaper hoax from 1919. Either known or unknown by the writer of the article, dinosaurs really had been spotted in the Congo. Members of a German expedition in 1913 were presumably the first white men to see the dinosaurs of the Congo. What put these dinosaurs back on the map would seem to be a sighting in the 1960s. Seventeen-year-old Nicolas Mondogo observed what appeared to be an *Apatosaurus* emerge from the Likouala Swamp in the Congo. This sighting and others would inspire several semi-famous expeditions into the swamp by Dr. Roy P. Mackal in the 1980s. Though he caught no dinosaurs, Mackal encountered enough witnesses in the jungles to build a strong case for the possibility that a few types of dinosaurs had survived into the modern age—in Africa at least.

Even aside from the Africa stories, a decent body of proof exists to show that a few dinosaurs could have survived into the modern era. The coelacanth, a prehistoric fish, was believed extinct after the end of the Cretaceous period. It was rediscovered in an African fish market in 1938 by Marjorie Courtenay-Latimer, curator of South Africa's East London Museum. And there are others still, such as the Okapi, a type of short-necked giraffe believed extinct until it too was rediscovered in Zaire in 1901. There are other examples, but those two are the best known.

Before we go any further into our reports on living dinosaurs during the Pioneer Period, we should talk a bit about vernacular. As many of these chapters contain the original newspaper reports describing the beasties, their vocabulary and meanings of certain words are a bit different than the way we use them today. Chiefly, I want to point out that during the Pioneer Period the term *serpent* was used much more frequently. While today we limit that term to snakes, back then that wasn't the case and almost any reptile could be described as a *serpent*. Or, in other words, even if the reptile-like creature had legs it would still be described as a *serpent*. Many of these stories carried the moniker of being a "Snaik Story"—snake being intentionally misspelled to indicate that the story might be of dubious veracity.

On that note, couldn't all of these stories simply be newspaper hoaxes? The answer is that plenty of them are, but not necessarily all of them. Back then it was common to pass off a made-up story as real news simply for

entertainment value. And, unless a disclaimer was published later, people never knew if said story was a hoax or not. You see, whereas today's "Fake News" is usually just a politically driven story, back in the Golden Age of newspapers fake news was just that—literal fake news for entertainment. It's a bit maddening for serious researchers of ufology, cryptozoology and the paranormal where these articles are concerned.

But, considering people have been sighting dinosaurs since ancient times and still claim to see them today, why wouldn't a few of those sightings be any different? If anything, the large breadth of articles published on these strange creatures during the Pioneer Period only advances the case for remnant dinosaurs and heretofore undiscovered reptiles in our world.

But with that said, how can one prove any of these alleged stories? The truth is, you can't. But you can corroborate them. For starters, proving that the witnesses were real people, and not potentially made-up names, is always helpful. Another question this author asked was, "How well do the described creatures actually match up with dinosaurs and what is today accepted dinosaur behavior?" For instance, a dinosaur encounter with what some considered a baby T-rex in the 1930s described the creature as running with its head in line with its tail. In the 1930s, dinosaurs were depicted as upright tail draggers (or, how Godzilla is often portrayed in movies due to being a man in a suit). Because this forward-leaning stance for a dinosaur was not yet known in the 1930s, it actually gave the account some credence.

Another question I asked was, "What if the giant reptile described doesn't match any known dinosaurs?" In that case, I searched for other cryptids with the same description. For instance, what seemed to be a "one-off" cryptid sighted in New Mexico closely matched a cryptid sighted in Africa. Considering neither cryptid was well known, nor would the African cryptid be used as a basis for a newspaper hoax in 1880s America, that too lent credence to the possibility that said article might not be a hoax.

So, when available, each original newspaper account is given followed with some evaluation: Were the witnesses real? Does the monster indicate behavior befitting a dinosaur? Does the creature correspond with another cryptid? and so on.

Whether a skeptic, a believer, or just someone who likes a good yarn, I hope you'll consider the possibility that these odd, fanciful encounters only

add to the body of evidence that there is more to remnant dinosaurs than meets the eye.

TERROR FROM THE SKY

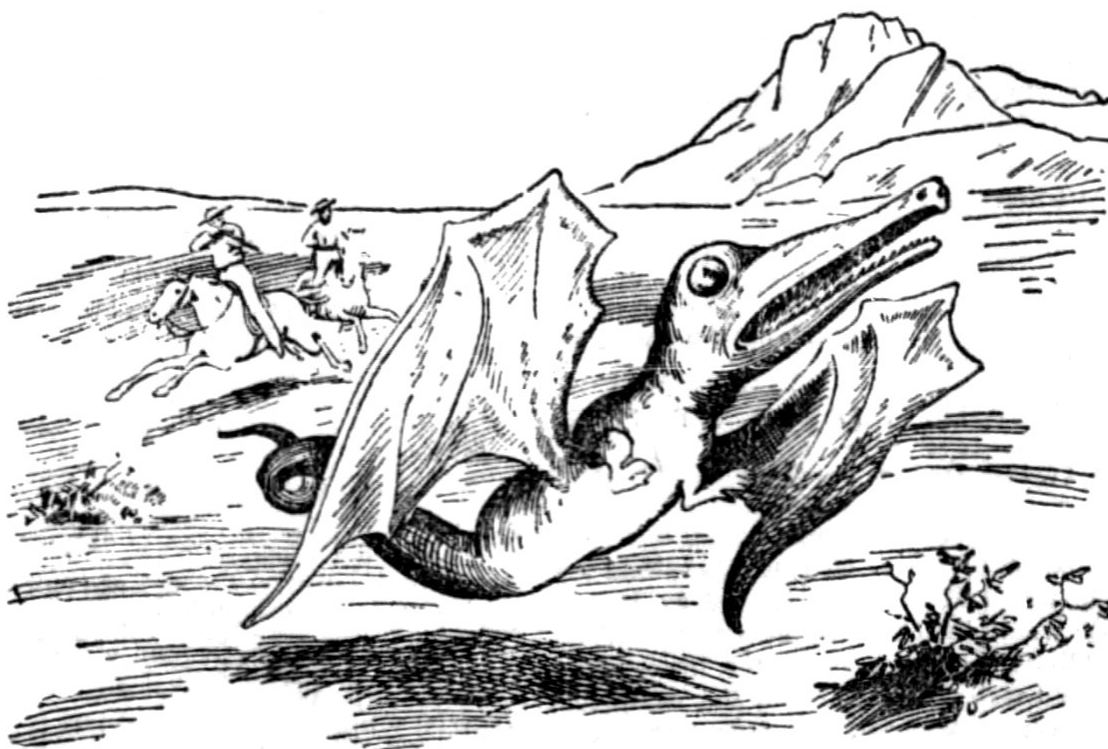
THE PTERODACTYL OF TOMBSTONE

THE BEST KNOWN ‘Cowboys vs. Dinosaurs’ story is undoubtedly the alleged confrontation between a pair of ranchers and a pterodactyl-like creature in Cochise County, Arizona, from the late 1800s. If you have more than a passing interest in cryptozoology you’re probably familiar with the basics: two cowboys riding across the Huachuca desert come across a giant reptile with wings struggling to become airborne. They shoot it with their rifles, kill it, and take it back to Tombstone where they tack it to the side of a barn. Then, a famous photograph is taken and published in various newspapers.

Though these are the commonly repeated highlights of the story, it actually didn’t happen just like that. You see, as the years went by, the story was misremembered and bungled by those that repeated it. Actually, if one account is to be believed, the story was wildly over-exaggerated from its inception.

Adding to the story’s legend is the newspaper that published it: the Tombstone *Epitaph*. This, of course, is the paper of the same boomtown made famous by the 1881 gunfight at the O.K. Corral involving Wyatt Earp and Doc Holiday. But, by the late 1880s, Tombstone was not the boomtown it once was. Some even said the town was dying and that the now rather infamous article ran by the *Epitaph* in 1890 was a last-ditch effort for attention.

As stated earlier, though the story has been misremembered and embellished in the years since its publication, this is what the original article had to say on April 26, 1890:



THE MONSTER WAS EVIDENTLY EXHAUSTED.

Found on the Desert

A Strange Winged Monster Discovered and Killed on the Huachuca Desert

A winged monster, resembling a huge alligator with an extremely elongated tail and an immense pair of wings, was found on the desert between the Whetstone and Huachuca mountains last Sunday by two ranchers who were returning home from the Huachucas. The creature was evidently greatly exhausted by a long flight and when discovered was able to fly but a short distance at a time.

After the first shock of wild amazement had passed the two men, who were on horseback and armed with Winchester rifles, regained sufficient courage to pursue the monster and after an exciting chase of several miles succeeded in getting near enough to open fire with their rifles and wounding it.

The creature then turned on the men, but owing to its exhausted condition they were able to keep out of its way and after a few well directed shots the monster partly rolled over and remained motionless. The men cautiously approached, their horses snorting with terror, and found that the creature was dead.

They then proceeded to make an examination and found that it measured about ninety-two feet in length and the greatest diameter was about fifty inches. The monster had only two feet, these being situated a short distance in front of where the wings were joined to the body. The head, as near as they could judge, was about eight feet long, the jaws being thickly set with strong, sharp teeth. Its eyes were as large as a dinner plate and protruded about halfway from the head.

They had some difficulty in measuring the wings as they were partly folded under the body, but finally got one straightened out sufficiently to get a measurement of seventy-eight feet, making the total length from tip to tip about 160 feet. The wings were composed of a thick and nearly transparent membrane and were devoid of feathers or hair, as was the entire body. The skin of the body was comparatively smooth and easily penetrated by a bullet.

The men cut off a small portion of the tip of one wing and took it home with them. Late last night one of them arrived in this city for supplies and to make the necessary preparations to skin the creature, when the hide will be sent east for examination by the eminent scientists of the day.

The finder returned early this morning accompanied by several prominent men who will endeavor to bring the strange creature to this city before it is mutilated.

Unfortunately, there were no follow-up articles on the Tombstone monster, and we never did find out what became of the animal's remains. Though pterodactyl sightings aren't rare as far as cryptids go, the main problem with the original article is the massive dimensions of the animal. As it was, most species of flying reptiles—be it a pterodactyl or a Rhamphorhynchus—were relatively small. The two bigger species would be the pteranodon which had a wingspan over 20 feet long and the Quetzalcoatlus which had a wingspan upwards of 40 feet. As you can deduce for yourselves, these measurements are nowhere close to 160 feet!

That said, interestingly, on the note of the Quetzalcoatlus, the *Simon & Schuster Ency-clopedia of Dinosaurs* notes that this species “lived far inland, unlike its marine pterodactyl relatives, and would have used its immense wings to soar high above the ground on rising thermals.”^[7] The book also implied that the creature could be an “accomplished glider”. Basically, in trying to draw parallels between these prehistoric facts and the Tombstone creature, the Quetzalcoatlus may have had difficulty becoming airborne at times due to its immense size, just like the article implies the monster was having trouble doing.

Having discussed the creature’s rather unreal dimensions, is there any credibility to the story at all? Actually, there are two rather strong points that the story has in its favor. We’ll start with Horace Bell, the first man to resurrect the story in his 1930 book *On the Old West Coast*. Bell had been both an adventurer and a scholar. In addition to being a soldier, lawyer, filibuster and a Los Angeles Ranger, he was also a newspaper editor and journalist!^[8] The book basically recounted Bell’s various adventures in California, which included hearing the tale of a certain lake monster there. You see, preceding the Tombstone story was the tale of a flying monster that very much matched the Tombstone monster’s description living in Elizabeth Lake. “But a pterodactyl living in a lake?” you ask. This isn’t entirely far out as most pterosaurs hunted near the water and were adept at diving to catch fish. The Elizabeth Lake monster was seen for many years until 1890 when it flew east and was never seen again. Bell was smart enough to draw the conclusion that the Elizabeth Lake monster disappeared the same year that a creature of a similar description was killed east of California in Arizona...

The Tombstone story gained more credibility when a non-embellished “real” version of the story surfaced. Tombstone researcher Joshua Hawley is quoted in *Copper State Monsters* as saying that in either the 1930s or 1940s one of the real ranchers came forward during a Helldorado celebration. Hawley said that,

There is one strange thread to the story that leaves some plausibility to it...There was one old cowboy there and he decided to speak out basically. And he told reporters that he was one of the ranchers that shot at the creature, but they misled the story so badly, basically him and his friend chased the creature as it flew in the air, but the horses

were getting spooked and turned around on them and they couldn't get back to where they were chasing the creature and they were a little frightened too. They never shot it down. They never killed it and it flew away.^[9]

This same account was also told to Harry McClure, in Lordsburg, New Mexico, a town near the state border with Arizona.^[10] In 1910 McClure claimed that he knew the two ranchers (said to be well respected within the community) that had shot the monster bird when he was living in Lordsburg. McClure's remembrance of what the two men told him was much more grounded than what was printed in the *Epitaph*. According to McClure, the men told him the creature had a wingspan between only 20 and 30 feet—perfect measurements for either a pteranodon or a Quetzalcoatlus. The monster was struggling to become airborne and managed to do so twice before landing again.^[11]

Unlike the *Epitaph* story, the two men did not succeed in killing the monster when they shot it with their Winchesters. Instead, they left the sad creature alone when they failed to kill it. The last they saw of it, it was still struggling to launch itself back into the air.^[12] McClure was inspired to speak out when he saw the story published in the Fall 1969 issue of *Old West* magazine. The article, "Our Country's Mysterious Monsters" by J.K. Parrish, covered everything from the Tombstone pterodactyl to the Flathead Lake Monster and then some. Like most Old West writers, Parrish elaborated the story greatly adding in a great many details not present in the original article.^[13]

Though Parrish at least gets the date right as 1890,^[14] his added details most likely come from his own imagination, and not some heretofore unknown, more detailed follow-up article. For instance, the original article states that "The creature then turned on the men, but owing to its exhausted condition they were able to keep out of its way and after a few well directed shots the monster partly rolled over and remained motionless." Parrish stretches the whole encounter adding in some notable choreography, "It had come down with one wing folded under and trapped beneath its body. It was powerless to fly. But the other wing was free, and one swipe of it could crush a man. Or a flick of the giant tail could send one spinning across the sand, a lifeless ragdoll. Those enormous jaws lined with sharp teeth could bite a cowboy in half."^[15]

The whole section of the article is like this, full of added detail and conjecture that only further confuses the legend if one doesn't know better. To his credit though, Parrish wasn't the one who fabricated the story that a photograph of the monster was circulating—that had come earlier. That idea was put forth in a 1963 issue of *Saga* magazine. It was the article “Monster Bird that Carries off Human Beings!”^[16] by Jack Pearl that mistakenly moved the story back to 1886 (we'll give him the benefit of the doubt that this was accidental and not deliberate misinformation).^[17] The two ranchers became “prospectors” and, seemingly out of nowhere, Pearl also put forth the story that a photo was published in the *Epitaph* of six men standing in front of the monster's corpse which was nailed to a barn wall.^[18] Furthermore, Pearl goes on to add in a sequel to the Tombstone story in which several drunken saloon goers go hunting for the monster in the desert! Where he got this information is unknown, though presumably he either made it up or heard it from some yarn spinner.

Specifically, the portion of his article dealing with the Tombstone story goes thusly:

In the year 1886, the Tombstone, Arizona *Epitaph*, which helped make Wyatt Earp famous, published a photograph of a huge bird nailed to a wall. The newspaper said it had been shot by two prospectors and hauled into town by wagon. Lined up in front of the bird were six grown men with their arms outstretched, fingertip to fingertip. The creature measured about 36 feet from wingtip to wingtip.

In 1889, a group of revelers at the Oriental Saloon in Tombstone got to talking about that picture and made fun of the two prospectors who claimed to have killed the bird. By chance, one of the old silver hunters was standing down at the far end of the bar.

“If you're so damned smart,” he challenged them, “why don't you go out where we got the bird. There's plenty more of 'em nesting in the tops of them mountains. You'll see for yourselves.”

The party of happy drunks took off at once for the scene where, allegedly, the Thunderbird had been shot. By the time they reached the spot, it was almost dawn and the whisky was beginning to wear off. The fun seemed to have gone out of the adventure. With aching heads, they built a fire and rolled up in their blankets to sleep it off.

Just as they were dozing off, one of the men got up and went into the bushes to relieve himself. Minutes later, a terrified scream sent the others bolting out of their bed rolls, wide awake.

“God help me! It’s got me!” the unseen man in the woods screamed. “Aghhhhh!”

Grabbing rifles and pistols, the men ran in the direction of the screaming man, believing that a bear or some other wild animal had attacked him. In the first gray light they could make out his footprints in the damp earth, leading to a clearing in the woods. Suddenly the men stopped dead. The footprints ended abruptly in the middle of the clearing. They looked at each other in bewilderment.

“What the hell,” one man said nervously. “He disappeared into thin air.”

Instinctively, they all looked upwards, and, almost as if this gesture was a signal, the terrible screaming, which had ceased for a few moments, now started again—only this time it came from directly over their heads, high in the air.

“Let me go, lemme go, lemme gooo....” Gradually, it faded into the distance.

Shaken, wild-eyed, but sober, all four men who were present later signed sworn statements testifying to the truth of this incident. ^[19]

Again, where Pearl^[20] unearthed this tale is unknown and the article’s misinformation, deliberate or not, inadvertently spawned two different Arizona pterodactyl stories. One went that a Thunderbird was killed and photographed in 1886, and another went that in 1890 two cowboys killed or badly wounded another such creature (which may or may not have flown away).

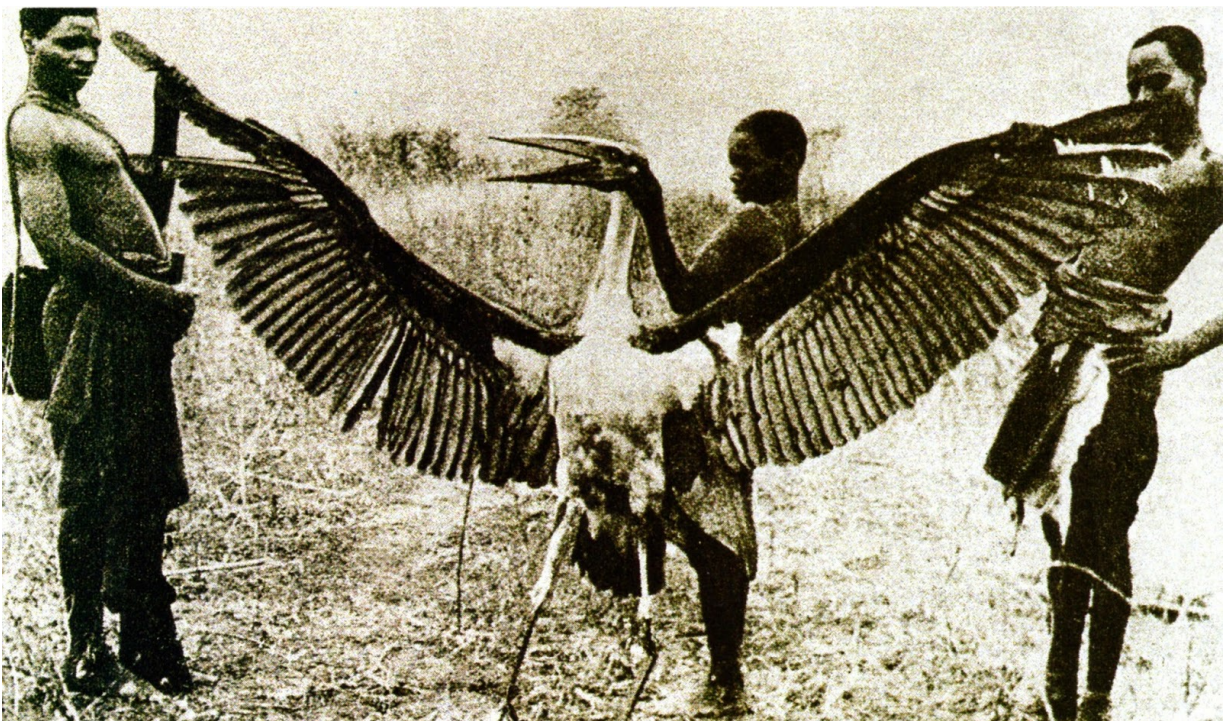
Actually, the Tombstone Pterodactyl photo may be more mythical and non-existent than the monster itself. Before and after the *Saga* article had been published, a man named Hiram M. Cranmer of Hammersley Fork, Pennsylvania, wrote letters to *Fate* magazine regarding Thunderbirds in 1950, 1956, 1958, 1963 and 1966. In September of 1963, he chimed in to say that he seconded that there was not only one photo, but a second photo showing “actors posed as professors” standing outside the *Epitaph* offices, where the monster was nailed to the wall. Cranmer also wrongly credited the story as happening ten years later in 1900! Some even claimed that

Cranmer himself had a copy of the photo, but we will never know because his house burned down with the alleged photo inside.

Respected Fortean researcher and crypto-zoologist Ivan T. Sanderson also claims that he once possessed a copy of said photo. Sanderson said that he had loaned it out to another researcher and that it had never been returned.

^[21] Adding to the confusion, W. Ritchie Benedict claimed that he saw Sanderson display the photo on the Canadian television program, *The Pierre Berton Show*, in the 1970s before it was lost. Naturally, no copies of this broadcast can be found either.

Noted cryptozoologist Karl P.N. Shuker theorizes that perhaps people mistake the Thunderbird photograph of a picture showing three African natives posing with a very large marabou stork (below). If seen briefly or at a distance as a child, one could possibly think that they had seen the missing Thunderbird photo. The photo was published in the 1972 edition of the *Guinness Book of Animal Facts and Feats*. Sanderson claimed that the photo showed the monster bird nailed to a barn wall, so Sanderson possessing the stork picture would seem to be out.



Sanderson wasn't the only paranormal researcher of note who claimed to see the photo, so too did John Keel, author of *The Mothman Prophecies*.

Keel told *Strange Magazine* that, “I know I saw it! And not only that—I compared notes with a lot of other people that saw it.”^[22]

Keel didn’t just remember the photo in general like so many others but remembered specific details about it. Notably, Keel stressed that it did look like a pterodactyl, not just an oversized bird. As to other details, he said,

I could almost make a drawing of it. I can remember all the details. The thing was sort of nailed to a barn, or hanging from a barn or something, and these men—a large group of men—were standing in front of it. They were all very rustic looking, like real farmers. And one guy had on a top hat and they referred to him in the caption as a college professor, but he was probably just another cowboy.^[23]

It interesting to note that Keel remembers one man posed as a “professor” though he was “probably just another cowboy” as this lines up rather well with the claims of Hiram M. Cranmer who also remembered a photo with “actors posed as professors”. Keel said he saw the picture in the 1950s in a men’s magazine or tabloid.^[24] He said it had to be the 1950s because he remembered comparing notes with it with Ivan T. Sanderson. By that time, Keel said, Sanderson had already loaned out and lost the photo. On that note, Sanderson’s own organization, SITU (Society for the Invest-igation of the Unexplained) began their own in-depth search for the missing photo. By the late 1970s, the *Epitaph* was beginning to tire of requests to locate the photo. In 1984 an *Epitaph* editor even wrote *Fate* magazine to reassure readers that the old issues had been searched exhaustively and that no Thunderbird photo was ever found. Or, in other words, quit asking!

Today, thanks to photo hoaxes, there are quite a few legitimate-looking Thunderbird photos circulating online. The most widespread shows Civil War soldiers standing over a dead pteranodon.^[25] Another shows a group of pioneer-era men standing over a similar bird monster. Then there is even a photo of a man holding up a small Rhamphorynchus! *True West* magazine did the best job of debunking the photos. For instance, they found that the men in the photo below had been taken from a real photo and photo-shopped over the image of the dead dinosaur.



And it gets weirder still. Today people are claiming that the missing photo is the result of false memories and even time travel tampering! We will quote from the wonderful *True West* article, “Tombstone’s Flying Monster” by Jana Bommersbach, to show just how far out the story has become.

“Kim” wrote she once had a book with the missing photo, but she searched the book and it isn’t there anymore. “I suspect that someone with the ability to go back in time stopped the photo from being taken,” she mused. “After that occurred, the photo disappeared from all the books and magazines it was ever in.”

“Tube” responded: “Before we indulge in Fortean space-time warps as explanations for ‘missing’ photographs I’d like to suggest that those curious about these things to research ‘false memory’ and ‘confabulation’ as likely candidates to explain this mystery.”

To that, “M. Valdemar” responded: “Tube, I entirely agree with you about false memory and confabulation. And yet, there’s some really powerful mojo at work with the thunderbird photo ... my first thought was ‘Oh yeah, I’ve seen that.’ I’m willing to concede that there is no

such photo; nonetheless, I find it fascinating that so many people (including me) should find the suggestions so irresistibly strong.”^[26]

Similarly, others explain the missing photo as being a part of the Mandela Effect. The Mandela Effect, dear friends, is attributed to the fact that although Nelson Mandela died in 2013, an alarming number of people swear that they remember him dying in the 1980s. This has led to a theory that when a large group of people possesses a “shared memory” that never happened, then perhaps it is proof of an alternate timeline or universe. Actually, though the Mandela Effect didn’t become a term until 2016, back in 1976 author Charles Weidmann put forth a similar idea in an issue of *Pursuit*. Weidmann postulated that a “reality shift” had taken place and that only those who saw the photograph were able to remember it before the reality shift occurred.

So, did two ranchers really kill a flying, remnant dinosaur in the Arizona desert only to have their story then further elaborated by the Tombstone *Epitaph*? Preceding that story, did another group of cowboys also kill a pterodactyl-like creature that was then photographed? And then, did a strange conspiracy occur involving parallel realities and time travel to wipe said photo from existence? I guess it just goes to show, no matter how wild a story already is, it can always get wilder.

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"Snaik Stories"

FLYING CROCODILE

The year 1890 was actually not the first time that pioneers claimed to see something flying through the sky that looked like an alligator with wings. Thomas Campbell and Joseph Howard, reputed to be "men of integrity", saw a similar beast on St. Patrick's Day (yes, I know...) of the year 1882. Whether they were sober or not is unknown, but they sent the following letter to C. N. Reed, the "crusty and contentious editor" of the *Gridley Herald*:

"About four o'clock, Friday afternoon last, while at work, we were startled by the sound of many wings flapping in the air. Looking up, we perceived passing over our heads, not more than forty feet above the tree-tops, a creature that looked something like a crocodile. It was, to the best of our judgment, not less than eighteen feet in length, and would measure two feet across the body from the head to the tail, a distance of probably twelve feet. The tail was about four feet long and tapered from the body to a point probably eight inches wide. The head was in the neighborhood of two feet in length and the jaws (for its mouth was open) could not have been less than sixteen inches and two feet from the body. As near as we could see these wings were to be formed similar to a duck's foot. On the underside of the body we counted twelve feet, six on a side." Mr. Howard fired one barrel of a shotgun at the monster, and writes, "It uttered a cry similar to

that of a calf and bear combined, but gave no sign of being inconvenienced or injured. In fact, when the shot struck, we heard the bullets rattle as though striking against a thin piece of sheet iron. The object was seen by a number of Chinamen, working near us, who were badly frightened and fled to the cabins.”

The editor concluded the tale writing, “This is the first time we have ever heard of such a creature as this, but our informants are reliable men, hence we cannot doubt their statements.” If the monster didn’t have six wings and twelve feet, it might help lend some credibility to the Tombstone story.

MONSTER OF THE JORNADA DEL MUERTO

THE SERPENT OF SAN MARCIAL

THE JORNADA DEL MUERTO, or “the dead man’s route”, is a notorious stretch of desert located in the Hembrillo Basin in Southern New Mexico. It runs about 90 miles north of the ruins of Fort Selden and is known as the hardest stretch of desert along El Camino Real de Tierra Adentro traveled by the Conquistadors. It was so named due to the death of a German man accused of witchcraft, Bernardo Gruber. Gruber fled across the Jornada—not yet named according to legend—in 1670 where he died due to the unforgiving conditions. And from then on the stretch of desert was the Jornada del Muerto.

Since then the Jornada has been the theater for many a mystery. Among them are a lost treasure at Victorio Peak, the still-unsolved disappearance of lawyer A.J. Fountain, and, according to an obscure newspaper article from 1888, a dinosaur sighting.

The January 27, 1888, *Helena Independent* reported this story out of San Marcial, NM:^{[\[27\]](#)}

MEXICO’S PRIZE SNAKE

It Is a Monster, indeed, and it Abides in an Extinct Crater

The section of country about San Marcial, N.M., has been aroused of late by reports of Mexicans who state that near an extinct crater near the plain known as the “Jornada del Muerto,” is the abode of a monster.

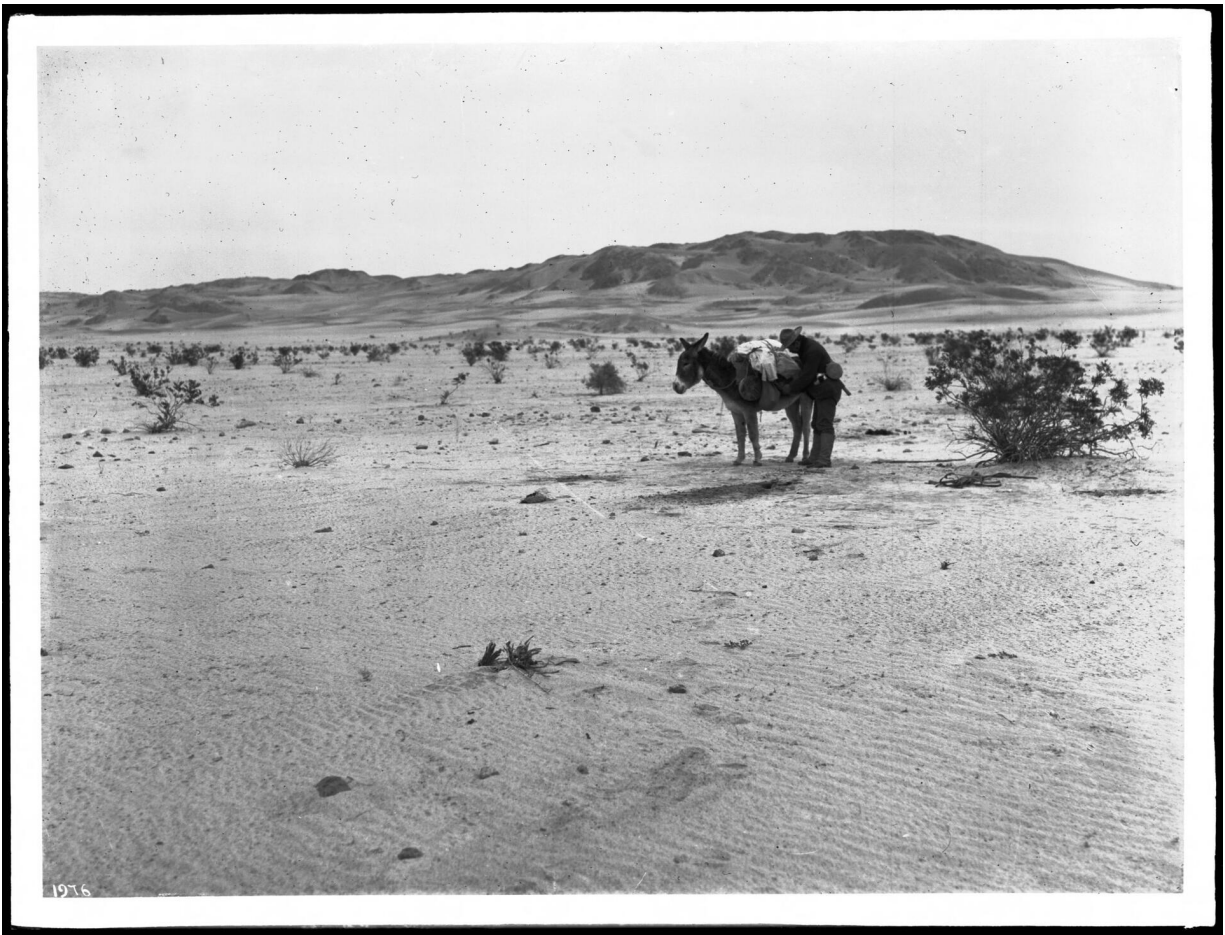
Some say it is 100 feet long and about two feet in circumference. The Mexicans are now afraid to venture within miles of the crater. A Mr. Alexander, who owns some mining property in that part of the country, says that he saw the serpent once while crossing the Jornada on the way to his mines. He was about half way across the plain, jogging leisurely behind his burro, dreaming of the immense wealth he hoped to realize from his property, when suddenly the burro stopped, erected its long ears, wheeled quickly around and made a mad stampede in the opposite direction. Mr. Alexander was at a loss to account for this strange freak of the burro, and was about to start in pursuit of the runaway, when he chanced to look ahead. Then his eyes gazed upon the monster. He was so struck with fear at first that, he says, his nerves had completely paralyzed, his hairs stood on end, and move he could not; he was rooted to the spot and his eyes were fixed upon the serpent. It was about a quarter of a mile from him and was traveling in the opposite direction—toward the crater. He says it appeared to be about sixty feet in length; but what surprised him most was the queer proportions of the creature. The fore parts were of enormous size, its head being fully as large as a barrel. A few feet behind the creature's head two large scales were visible, which glittered in the sun like polished shields; further back were two huge claws on either side, about two feet apart, which were all the monster had in the shape of feet. The rest of its body was comparatively small and tapering to the end of its tail. It traveled at a rapid gate, sometimes rearing its whole body up from the ground, and walked on its four claws. He watched it till it disappeared over a little hill, and then he started to look after his burro.

The Mexicans have the most deadly fear of the crater, and will not venture within miles of it, there being a popular tradition among them that it is the abode of some terrible serpent. The Mexicans asserted that on one occasion a descent of the crater was made by three men, and as none of them returned it was generally believed that they were devoured by the monster.

What are we to make of such a strange creature? At first glance, the article's description bears a vaguely similar description to a stegosaurus. The description stating that the creature walked on four legs, or "claws", and had two large scales would seem to describe some kind of variation on the stegosaurus. However, the proportions of the body are a curious addition to the report, since it brings to mind the image of an overly top-heavy animal. And, like the Tombstone Pterodactyl, was this animal also exaggerated in size by the writer of the article? As it is, 100 feet seems an excessive length for a remnant dinosaur! Stegosaur fossils certainly never reached these lengths, and on average they reached a length of about 30 feet at the largest.

Overall, the story sounds too good to be true: a miner sights a dinosaur heading into an extinct volcanic crater in one of the most dangerous stretches of desert in New Mexico Territory. But that said, does anything add up in the article? Are there any other cryptid sightings that correspond to the San Marcial Monster? Are the locations and fantastic settings in the story actually real? Actually, the answer is yes, right down to the volcanic crater.

The volcanic crater mentioned in the story was most likely Kilbourne Hole. Specifically, it is located between the Potrillo Mountains and the Rio Grande in southern Doña Ana County. Technically Kilbourne Hole is a maar, a depression or pit created by a volcanic explosion with little material emitted aside from volcanic gas. The maar is believed to be somewhere between 24,000 to 100,000 years old. The crater is elliptical in shape, 1.7 miles long and hundreds of feet deep.



Prospector and burro in New Mexico desert.

Considering that the newspaper story mentions a Mr. Alexander on his way to his mine, it's worth noting that the site of Kilbourne Hole was rich in unique minerals. Namely, the crater contained debris that when cracked open contained sparkling yellow and green interiors of olivine glass granules. If Mr. Alexander mined these materials is unknown. In any case, in 1975, Kilbourne Hole was designated as a National Natural Landmark by the National Park Service.

The crater mentioned could have also been Aden Crater, a small shield volcano (a type of volcano usually composed almost entirely of fluid lava flow). Like Kilbourne Hole, it too is a part of the Potrillo volcanic field of New Mexico. The crater is about the size of the Sun Bowl Stadium at the University of Texas at El Paso. Adding to the flavor of the story is the fact that the area has deep caverns that are hazardous to hikers. Furthermore, in one of the caves, a prehistoric ground sloth was exhumed.

Back to the subject of the monster's description: could one argue that the described monster sounds like something that was simply made up since it doesn't really match any known dinosaurs? This author's greatest point of contention is the fact that the witness said the monster had only two sets of claws in the way of feet. What exactly does that mean, that the monster lacked feet and literally had tusks or claws for feet? Jerome Clark presents the monster as a type of plesiosaur, with the claws being like fins, in his book *Unnatural Phenomena*. This isn't a bad idea, as the witness may have mistaken the fins for "claws". If this is the case, many sea serpent sightings describe "wings" just below the neck, which could be what the witness described as the plates just below the neck. But then again, the chances of a plesiosaur being out in the middle of the dry desert are slim as far as remnant dinosaurs go!

Or, perhaps, the witnesses mistook the feet for odd, gigantic claws for some reason. In any case, let's move along to other dinosaurs and cryptids that could also be argued to match the description. As it turns out, similar stegosaurus-like creatures have been sighted in the Congo, in the same area as *Mokele-mbembe*. The better known of the two is called *mbielu-mbielu-mbielu*. Its existence was learned of during one of the Roy Mackal expeditions in the 1980s. While showing a native a dinosaur book, rather than pick out an Apatosaurus, one picked out a stegosaurus and insisted she had seen it once, as had other natives. While this creature was closer in description to a stegosaurus, the second stegosaurus-like mystery creature somewhat matches the description of the Jornada del Muerto monster.

It is called *nguma-monene*, which more or less means giant ("monene") snake ("nguma") by the natives of the Mataba tributary of the Ubangi River. Even the size is consistent with the size listed within the article, as *nguma-monene* is described as a snake-like creature over 130 feet long! Like the Jornada monster, it has four small legs but has a more pronounced serrated ridge of dorsal plates across its back that are triangular in shape. The creature has a low slung body and a forked tongue.

In his book *A Living Dinosaur?* Mackal writes,

Of all the animals described to us, the Nguma-monene is the most mysterious. It is significant, although we have less descriptive information about this creature than any other in our dossier, it does happen to have been observed by an American missionary. Almost

without exception, anecdotal evidence about the other unknown animals in Africa came to us from pygmies or Congolese. No matter how reliable these informants, the information they provided had been filtered through vast cultural differences.^[28]

The first recorded sighting took place in 1961 by a reputable witness, the oldest sister of Michel Zabatou (first secretary of the General Assembly). The woman was bathing in the Ubangi River when she saw a huge serpentine head rise out of the water only 50 feet away from her. As she ran screaming onto the shore the noise attracted numerous villagers who came to see what the fuss was about. Together, for around thirty minutes, they watched the creature swim through the water, noticing its oddly serrated back.

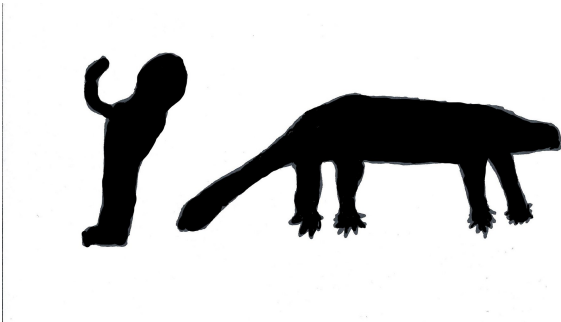
The next recorded sighting comes nine years later from Mackal's aforementioned missionary, Pastor Joseph Ellis. In 1971, while traveling up the Ubangi River, Ellis observed the same creature walking on land. He estimated it to be thirty feet long and one meter in diameter (comparable to the Jornada monster at two feet in circumference). Ellis watched as the black colored creature entered the river and swam across to the other side. When Ellis arrived at his destination, the Mataba village, he was shocked that natives weren't impressed by his story. They seemed either to know all about the creature and didn't regard it as anything unusual, or considered it a taboo subject and chose not to discuss it.

So, assuming that the Jornada Monster article wasn't an outright hoax, could the alleged San Marcial monster and *nguma-monene* be one and the same? And if they do exist what are they? Dr. Mackal considers the animal to possibly be a heretofore undiscovered species of monitor lizard for both the *mbielu-mbielu-mbielu* and *nguma-monene*.

Though our comparisons between the San Marcial Monster and the *nguma-monene* are all good and well, wouldn't it help if there was a similar monster in New Mexico? To a degree, there is according to Native American legends in the vicinity of Northern New Mexico. Native Americans talk of *Yeitso*, a gigantic quadruped reptile whose body had armored scales. According to legend, the hero twins of Native American lore slew the monster with a lightning bolt near present-day Farmington. And indeed, in 1905 paleontologist Walter Granger inspected a "wagon load

of immense bones” brought into Farmington by some Navajo men who had found them while digging out a spring in the Cretaceous Badlands.^[29]

There is another dinosaurian contender for just what the San Marcial creature could be that is little known outside of the most knowledgeable dinosaur fans and experts. The creature is the *Desmatosuchus*, not yet discovered in 1888. It is a quadruped that looks similar to a crocodile,^[30] only it has two sharp bony protrusions coming out just below the neck above the shoulders. The creature was an herbivore that lived during the Late Triassic. Its remains were discovered in Texas in the 1920s.



On a final note, it’s also worth pointing out that there are several pictograph sites within Hembrillo Canyon in the Jornada, the best-known one being a spot called the “Bloody Hands”.^[31] The second site, not as well known, is located near the ruins of an old sheep ranch. Among

the pictographs are what could be argued to depict a man standing next to a giant, quadruped reptile of some sort. Could it be the mysterious San Marcel serpent?

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“Snaik Stories”

CURIOUS CATCH

This relatively short blurb from the May 11, 1870, *Marysville Tribune* tells of fishermen catching a creature akin to a dragon...

Curious Monster.

A strange monster was captured recently in the river, opposite Canton, by some fishermen, in their seine, while dragging for fish. We know not what to call it, or what it looks like, or how to describe it, for it is unlike any creature of earth, air or water that we have ever seen. It is not a fish, nor is it an alligator, or crocodile, or a turtle, but resembles the pictures we have often seen in books of the mythical dragon. It is a hideous looking and apparently savage monster—the last remnant of the first age. It has a huge, slimy scaly body, short, strong legs, immense claws, long, serpent-like tail, and sharp teeth, set in like those of a saw. It chews up ravenously everything with which it comes in contact, but seems loth to leave the water even in quest of food, and can only be seen when drawn out by the chain with which it is made fast. We should judge it to be ten feet in length, & weighs probably five hundred pounds. When provoked it makes a roaring noise similar to a sea lion. The parties having it in charge are having a large tub or tank made for it, and they intend to take it to Quincy and St. Louis for exhibition. They have refused a thousand dollars for it.

THE CREATURE FROM CROSSWICKS CREEK

AN AUTHENTIC TALE OF TERROR IN WARREN COUNTY

CROSSWICKS, OHIO is today a largely forgotten settlement. Even now it remains an unincorporated community and only one road (Old Stage Road) passes through it. However, the settlement is remembered by more than a few cryptozoologists for a disturbing story from May of 1882. The tale tells of two boys having a deadly encounter with a monster while fishing at Satterthwaites Run, a stream that passes through Crosswicks.

The story is unique, in part, because it focuses on a theropod type dinosaur walking erect on two legs. As it is, most pioneer dinosaur sightings were typical of serpentine creatures that lived in the water. Ironically, in spite of this mystery creature being a theropod, it is still described as a “snake”.

Before the encounter in 1882, which may have resulted in the death of one of the boys, apparently a strange creature had been leaving footprints where it had crossed the pike for some time.^[32] Area residents didn’t seem to give them much thought until it was finally too late...



*The Crosswicks Monster.
Warren County Historical Society.*

SNAIX

An Authentic Tale of a Monster in Warren County

Remarkable Capers of the Reptile

A Whole Neighborhood Alarmed

Waynesville, Ohio, May 29. Although this is an old settled neighborhood, and the primitive snakes in the main, have long since disappeared; except the black, garter and rattlesnake and occasionally some of the other species, we are once in a while greeted with the report of some monster of this uncanny tribe.

For several years it has been reported that the track of one above the town, of unusual size, had, on different occasions, been seen in the dust, where it had crossed the pike. This report made the timid fearful, while the generality of the people did not seem to fear or care anything about it; and it has been reserved until yesterday to develop one of the most remarkable specimens ever seen, in or out of snake season, and the story thereof is so well authenticated that the more incredulous of the neighborhood on big snake stories are forced at last to lend an attentive ear.

About one mile north of this place is a little village called Crosswicks, in which several colored families reside. Among the rest is John Lynch, who has two boys, Ed and Joe, aged respectively thirteen and eleven years. These boys were at a small creek on the south side of the village fishing, yesterday. After sitting on the bank a short time they heard quite a stir among some old reeds, grass and brush behind them, and on looking round they saw a huge monster approaching them rapidly. They screamed and, paralyzed almost with horror, started to run, when the snake, or whatever it might be—for they never saw aught like it before; came close up to the older one, and suddenly throwing out two long arms, or forelegs, seized the boy in its slimy embrace, simultaneously producing two more legs, about four feet long, from some mysterious hiding place in its body, and dragged the boy some one hundred yards down the creek to a large sycamore, twenty-six feet in diameter at the base, hollow, and with a large opening on one side. Through this aperture the monster attempted to enter with the boy who by this time was almost dead with fright and unable to make any resistance.

Three men, Rev. Jacob Horn, George Peterson and Allen Jordan—were quarrying stone a short distance above where the boys were fishing, and hearing their screams and seeing the creature yanking one off, hurried in an attempt to rescue the child. They reached the tree just as the snake, who, failing in its first attempt to drag the boy into his den, became alarmed, probably by the cries made by its pursuers, unfastened its horrible fangs and dropped the more than half dead child to the earth. The little fellow was picked up and carried home, and Dr. L.C. Lukens, of Waynesville, summoned to attend him.

In the afternoon about sixty men, armed with clubs, dog, axes, etc., gathered around the sycamore-tree and concluded to cut it down and destroy its fearful tenant. They began cutting, when, becoming alarmed for his safety, the formidable snake leaped from the aperture, threw out its fore and hind legs, erected itself about twelve or fourteen feet, and, with the velocity of a race horse, crossed the creek and ran up a small hill, climbed over a rail fence, breaking it down, and, continuing north a mile, followed by the pursuers, until he reached a hole in a large hill under a heavy ledge of rocks. Some of the men and dogs were so terrified at the beast's first appearance that they only thought of getting out of the way. But the braver portion followed until the frightful thing made good his retreat underneath the ground.

It will be watched for and killed if possible. It is described as being from thirty to forty feet long,^[33] sixteen inches in diameter, and the legs four feet long and covered with scales the same as the body. Feet about twelve inches long and shaped like a lizard's, of black and white color, with large yellow spots. Head about sixteen inches wide, with a long, black forked tongue and the mouth inside deep red. The hind legs appeared to be used to give it an erect position, and its propelling power is in its tail.^[34]

Dr. Lukens said this morning that the boy, his patient, was badly bruised and scratched, horribly frightened, and that he lay in convulsions and spasms until three o'clock this morning, when he fell asleep, but frequently wakened with fright and terror, yet the Doctor thinks he will recover in a few days.

The foregoing is vouched for by the persons whose names are given above, and many more can be given if necessary, the material points having been furnished your correspondent by Judge J. W. Keys, one of our oldest and most influential citizens.

It's unknown for just how long the story caused a stir in the area, but it seems to have first been resurrected by area folklorist Hazel Brookes. She wrote about the incident in a local history series entitled *Folklore Series No.11: Crosswicks Monster*. In it, she writes that the article "created quite a furor..." She continues on that a great many cards and letters were received regarding the incident. "Many signified a desire to come to Waynesville and

participate in the search,” she wrote. She reprinted a sample letter which went as follows:

Dear Sir: I see in the Enquire the report of a large reptile which was furnished the correspondent by you it states. I would like more information if you will please be so kind as to write me a letter. Was it seen going into the hole under the rocks. How large is the hole, where it went in the hill last. How high up on the hill side is it and is it steep below. Can a man get privilege of trapping him alive. Who is the man who owns the land where he is and his post office. How far from a railroad is it and the name of the road and the station. If you will answer this I will be very thankful. Is anyone trying to capture him alive. Please write as soon as possible.

Brookes concludes the story by writing, “There is no record that this monster was captured—or ever seen again.”

However, Brookes immediately doubles back and tells us of one other potential sighting of the creature sometime later. Just when is unclear as Brookes’s exact words are, “A story widely circulated some years ago was that three young men driving near the Shaker Swamp,^[35] west of Lebanon, had a fright they never forgot.” Again, what Brookes means by “some years ago” is uncertain. Does this mean a few years before she wrote the article, or a few years after the sighting?

The story goes that the three young men saw an animal resembling the one from Crosswicks a short ways ahead of them on the road. The only details given are that one of the men’s horses reared up and refused to go further. No exact description of the creature is given, and Brookes mentions a rumor that the whole thing was a ruse to scare away one of the young men. You see, the sighting took place on a road owned by a man whose daughter was being courted by one of the three young men. However, Brookes also states that there were others who claimed to see the monster along the same road.

As to the original story’s merits, all of the men named were in fact real people. Though this was mentioned by several other authors I looked into the matter myself, finding the doctor, L.C. Lukens, mentioned in the journal *American Observer Medical Monthly*, Volume 12 from 1875. The publication mentions how L.C. Lukens graduated from Pulte Medical

College on February 11, 1875, in Cincinnati, Ohio. There were many other records of Lukens to be found.

According to the article's end, it was Judge J. W. Keys who related the story to the reporter. And indeed, there was a great deal to be found about the Honorable Judge Keys, who was the mayor of nearby Waynesville, Ohio in 1839. Mention of his retirement can be found in the *Miami-Gazette* on February 19th, 1879, which states that "upon the completion of his term of office as Probate Judge of Warren County, and his relinquishment of its emoluments and honors, one day of last week, Judge Keys was presented with a handsome ebony and gold cane by his associates in and about the court house."

Now, "respectable citizens" could certainly receive some good-natured amusement by serving as the "credible witness" of a "snake story" all in good fun. However, this story really wasn't in good fun as it depicts the abduction and possibly fatal experience of a child. It seems an odd tale for a judge to endorse were it not true.

Having discovered that most of these men were real, my next question was: did Ed Lynch, the victim, die? According to some stories, the youth passed away a few days after being attacked by the monster. While I found no death records for Ed Lynch in Warren County, I can say that I found records of his brother, Joseph Lynch, marrying a Lucinda Havens in 1889. The math adds up, as Joseph would have been 18 by that time, the typical age most young men his age wed. That there are no records for Ed getting married is telling.

In looking at death records, curiously, Joseph Lynch died only two years after he married in 1891! The father, John Lynch, died in 1903. Oddly, there was no record of Ed Lynch at all in the Warren County obituaries. Of course, the listing was for deaths up until the early 1900s. Presuming he survived the attack, being born in 1869, Ed Lynch could have lived into the 1960s. If he had though, chances are he would have told his remarkable story to someone while he was alive.

But, considering that Ed was not only frightened half to death but also clawed and bitten by the reptile, his wounds could have become infected to a fatal extent. Considering that the article states that the monster "unfastened its horrible fangs" from Ed's body, chances sound good that he was bitten by the creature. Since there are many poisonous lizards, like Gila

Monsters and Komodo Dragons (which this creature somewhat resembles) it seems likely that if Ed were to be bitten the bite could be poisonous.

Cryptozoologist Nick Sucik went to the trouble to ask a former Warren County resident about the story. The unnamed man had heard it from his grandfather and his version was slightly different. Sucik wrote, “In the version passed on to him, a skirmish broke out between the men and the creature, resulting in a portion of its tail being chopped off before it could flee.”^[36] Furthermore, while in the newspaper account we leave off with 13 year old Ed Lynch alive, Sucik’s subject claims the teen eventually died. John Lynch, the father, then destroyed the severed tail piece. Sucik was also intrigued that his informant was able to point out the spot where the confrontation occurred, and speculated that “oral tradition of the event may still linger amongst the community.”^[37] And indeed, when I myself contacted the Warren County Historical Society they thought nothing of my strange request concerning information on the monster!

But what was the Crosswicks monster? Was it a dinosaur or something more plausible? The more down to earth theories contend that the monster could have been a misplaced Komodo Dragon, a New Guinea Crocodile Monitor, an Australian Perentie or even the Asian Water Monitor. However, do any of these creatures have the ability to use their forearms or run on their hind legs? The answer is, of course, no. Nor do they reach the size of the thirty to forty-foot long Crosswicks monster.

Assuming that the creature really was a dinosaur let’s analyze its finer details, particularly the limbs. The article writes of the creature “suddenly throwing out two long arms, or forelegs, seized the boy in its slimy embrace, simultaneously producing two more legs, about four feet long, from some mysterious hiding place in its body...”

A terror-stricken boy, who had presumably never seen pictures of dinosaurs or large monitor lizards before, would likely be at a loss for words as how to describe such a creature. And, if the creature were hunched low to the ground in a stalking position, perhaps the witness would not have noticed the hind legs until it began to use them.

In terms of dinosaurs, one of the most likely candidates would be the *Saurornitholestes* of the Family *Saurornithoididae*, which was about six feet long and had “powerful hands adapted for grasping.” The problem would be these creatures’ smaller statures, maxing out at around six feet in length while the Crosswicks creature is described as much longer than that.

Then again, reptiles never stop growing. The creature could also have certainly belonged to a larger member of the carnivorous, theropod dinosaur family which did reach greater sizes. The only problem with them was that many had short arms that would make grasping a human being difficult.

Whatever it was, a similar dinosaurian creature was spotted in nearby Trimble County, Kentucky in 1975. Mark Hall dug up the report, in which a 15-foot lizard monster was seen. Like the Crosswicks monster, it could be a quadruped or a biped depending on how it wanted to move. Even its coloring was similar, as it had black and white stripes and orange speckles all over its body.

The most notable comparison between the Crosswicks Monster and other relic dinosaurs was drawn by Nick Sucik, who connected the dots between Ohio and a story from Oklahoma. The Crosswicks monster hiding out in a tree matches stories from tribal legends from the Yuchi Indians in Oklahoma regarding a dinosaur.

The legend was unearthed by author Adrienne Mayor in her book *Fossil Legends of the First Americans*. It started in the year 2000 when Yuchi tribal members were invited to the grand opening of the Oklahoma Natural History Museum. When the tribe members saw the skeleton of an allosaurid dinosaur^[38] they recognized it as a specific “monster lizard” from one of their legends. In the spring of 2001, Mayor heard the tale from Jason Jackson, a notable folklorist who had witnessed the “Lizard Dance” of the Yuchi in 1993.^[39] During the ceremony, an elder named Jimmie Skeeter told Jackson the origin story of the dance.

The story went that long ago a medicine man had just chosen three boys as his apprentices. The quartet traveled to a faraway land to conduct their sacred training. There the medicine man took note of a peculiar hollowed-out tree and warned the boys to stay away from it. But, like any good cautionary tale, they didn't. When the medicine man sent two of the boys out to fetch wood, one went to cut down the tree. A lizard monster then grabbed the boy from within a hole in the tree, drawing him inside to his death. When the medicine man learned what had happened, he set a trap for the monster. He prepared a “special medicine”, or poison, and presumably stuffed it into a dead animal of some sort.^[40] The lizard monster came along, ate the poison, and died. The medicine man then cut off the monster's head and took it back to his village.

The connection between this story and the Crosswicks encounter—a reptile with functioning forelimbs living in a hollowed-out tree—is startling considering it’s a very odd detail placed in stories from different eras in different states.^[41]

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GROWL OF THE GOWROW

ARKANSAS ANKLYSAUR OF THE BOTTOMLESS PIT?

THE GOWROW is probably just as made up as Wisconsin's Hodag. For the uninitiated, the Hodag was a mythical beast invented by lumberjacks that had absolutely no basis in fact whatsoever. It was described as having "the head of a frog, the grinning face of a giant elephant, thick short legs set off by huge claws, the back of a dinosaur, and a long tail with spears at the end." An alleged captured Hodag was exhibited around county fairs in 1896 until proven to be a hoax. The Gowrow, though probably just as made up, is a bit more dinosaurian than the Hodag. Nor has it ever been proven to be an outright hoax like the Hodag.

The Gowrow was first reported in the state of Arkansas on New Year's Eve of 1897. It was described as a 20-foot reptile with tusks and claws. The article was written by an Elbert Smithee, and it even included a sketch of the monster by Elmer Burrus based off of an alleged photograph taken by a William Miller.



The Green Gowrow, Killed in Searcy County.

Mr. William Miller, the well-known businessman of this city, returned Friday from Searcy County. Mr. Miller tells a marvelous story of the discovery of a hitherto unknown monster near the town of Blanco, in Calf Creek Township.

"For some time I have heard reports, more or less vague, of the presence of this animal in Searcy County," said Mr. Miller, "but I place no credence in the tales that were told. About two weeks ago I was called to Blanco on important business, and I determined to investigate the matter thoroughly while I was there.

"Immediately upon my arrival at Blanco I instituted inquiries and I was amazed to find that the people of the whole Township, and of St. Joe and Richmond townships, were in a fever of excitement over what they called the "gowrow," which they described as a terrible animal which slaughtered cattle, horses, hogs, dogs and cats. The gowrow had terrorized the community for several months but though numerous

attempts had been made to capture it all of them had proved unsuccessful. The animal would steal down from the mountains at night and commit his depredations. He would break into cowsheds and kill and devour the cows and calves. Several times he had been interrupted in his bloodthirsty work, but he always managed to escape, carrying one of his victims with him.

“I inquired why they called it the gowrow, and was told that was the awful cry it uttered when engaged in its devilish work. During the recent snow, a youngster who resides in the neighborhood discovered the tracks of the gowrow while out rabbit hunting. Being alarmed at the ponderous size and peculiar shape he fled in great consternation to a farmhouse and notified the inmates of the presence of the tracks. We formed a posse, armed ourselves with shotguns and Winchesters and started in hot pursuit of the gowrow. We followed the tracks without difficulty for several miles through the new fallen snow until they disappeared at the river bank. The monster had evidently entered the river and thus escaped his pursuers. A diligent search was made of the river bank for a number of miles, which resulted in the discovery of an enormous cave which was so nicely concealed under a shelf of rock, and so completely hid by a thick clump of cedars that it had hitherto escaped to the notice of the inhabitants of the country. The ground had been worn smooth from the water’s edge to where they caved into the rock, as though some ponderous body had been repeatedly dragged over it. We soon secured light wood torches and, nothing daunted, entered the cavern where we were confronted by a sight which made each particular hair stand on end like quills upon the fretful porcupine. As the flickering light of the [torches] illuminated the erstwhile darkness of the cave, casting our distorted shadows against the shaggy rock, there [we found] countless skeletons and skulls of all kinds and sizes, many of them evidently those of unfortunate human beings, while others seem to have belonged to horses, sheep, hogs, dogs and wild animals that had served a dainty repast for the gowrow at some time.

We [scrambled] out of the cave and concealed ourselves behind a large boulder to await the monster’s homecoming. We had waited probably a half hour when we heard a ponderous splashing in the river as though a great stern wheel steamer was approaching, and the next

moment a huge body of a sickly green hue dragged itself awkwardly out of the water and began wobbling its way towards the cave. Shall I attempt to describe it? Its head was ponderous in size and resembled somewhat that of a man, only two enormous tusks projected over the under lip. Its legs were short and thick and terminated into a web foot which somewhat resembled that of a duck's, only each toe was capped by a vicious looking claw. Its body was covered with enormous scales, while along its back bristled a series of sharp horns, which came to an abrupt end near the root of the tale. The tale was thin and long and was provided with a sharp bone at the end which the gowrow could wield as a sickle, and when enraged would prove a formidable weapon. Just at this point I got in the snapshot (which is printed in this article) with my Kodak, and then I gave the command to fire. The men fired a volley and when the smoke cleared away we saw the monster writhing in the throes of death, but he died hard. With his ponderous tail he lashed down a couple of trees as large as my leg, and also cut off the leg of a poor fellow named Tom Brennan, who was formerly a section hand on the iron Mountain Railroad, and last year worked on the section below Benton. Not wishing to see the monster suffer I again gave the commands to fire and this volley ended the gowrow's suffering. The enraged farmers then sprang upon the dead beast with their axes and, more in anger than sorrow, hewed him to pieces. I then immediately returned to Blanco and the next day, having transacted my business, left for Little Rock.

“From a careful examination of the photograph which I made of the monster I am convinced it is a pachyderm, and is a combination of the hyaenidae and rhinocerotidae. It has incisor and canine teeth which apparently show that it has some relationship to ceratorhinus of the rhinocerotidae genus. These animals were supposed to have long since disappeared from the earth. Their remains are found in the Miocene formation. In all probability the specimen was the last of its kind, and I regret very much that it was killed, as it would have been a vast interest to scientists, and would have afforded a rare opportunity for gathering trustworthy information as to the characteristics of prehistoric animals. I have, however made arrangements for gathering its bones and for their shipment to the Smithsonian Institute at Washington.”

But of course, our friend the Gowrow never made it to Washington. The Encyclopedia of Arkansas writes, “Williams claimed to have sent the body to the Smithsonian Institution, but it never arrived at the Washington DC museum.”^[42] An article in the *Salina Journal* in 1951 wrote that, “The Smithsonian denied receiving it and Miller always insisted that some minor official up there probably embezzled his trophy.” The editor who published the original story, Fred W. Allsopp, even said, “It was a great fake, probably without foundation in fact.”^[43]

As for other particulars, I searched census records for the two names given in the article: William Miller and Tom Brennan. I found no William Millers that sounded correct but did find several Tom Brennans in Arkansas that were in the right age range. However, there was no way to tell whether or not they were amputees who had lost a leg. A local archivist found only one who had a record of being maimed (in this case, he claimed he was shot in the hip), but he was too young as he was born in 1888.

I did at least find a “Mr. Thomas Brennan” mentioned in *The Railway Age Monthly and Railway Service Magazine, Volume 1*, published in 1880. In line with Miller’s remark that he was a former Iron Railroad employee, the book lists him as retiring in 1880, while Miller said he worked up until 1887.

Our second point of contention is the alleged photograph. First off, yes, it would have been possible for William Miller to take a snapshot as the Kodak camera, capable of snapshots, was released in 1888. As a “well-known businessman” it’s entirely likely that Miller could have had such a camera in his possession. It’s just not as likely that he photographed the monster. And if he did, where is this photograph today?

On March 9, 1898, a follow-up story on what sounds like a juvenile Gowrow was published in the *Daily Arkansas Gazette* on page 6 accompanied by another illustration.

ANOTHER GOW-ROW

C.B. Webb Meets and Slays the Terrible Monster.

Last Wednesday Mr. C. B. Webb, who lives near town, was at work in a jungle near his farm when a hideous looking animal about the size of

a dog came along. Cuthbert^[44] seized his ax, charged on the beast and after a terrible battle killed it. A Ledger artist was nearby with a kodak and took a snap shot just as the gow-row was in the act of springing upon Cuthbert.

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The beast is of a pided color, has a head like a bulldog, long claws, fins along its back, and a tail of enormous length, on the end of which is a sharp spear. This is doubtless the same animal that has been prowling around for weeks along Big Creek. No one knows its name or species, but it is probably related to the gow-row killed in Searcy county a few weeks ago.--Viola Ledger.

TO CURE A COLD IN ONE DAY

I must interrupt the article for just a moment to say that it's one thing to photograph a cryptid once, but something else to photograph it twice!

Considering the other article also claimed to photograph the Gowrow something is clearly wrong with this story. But anyhow, to continue on with the article...

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For many years, this was the last we would hear of the creature. One man who did believe the Gowrow story had some merit to it was the respected folklorist of the Ozarks, Vance Randolph. He was born in 1892 and would have been about seven years old when the alleged incident happened. Randolph furthermore claimed that he had found tales of other Gowrow sightings that had happened in the early 1880s. As such, Randolph believed the Gowrow was a heretofore unknown species. According to Randolph, he heard that the Gowrow's young hatched from soft-shelled eggs about the size of a beer keg. The mother Gowrow even carried her newly hatched infants in a pouch like a Kangaroo.

He also dug up another story that was total hogwash. A man from Mena in Polk County had supposedly fed a Gowrow an endless stream of dried apples until it became so fat that it could not leave its burrow. The man then took his Gowrow around various fairs in an act.^[45] After collecting the audiences' money (a quarter a head), he would burst from behind the curtain in bloodied, tattered clothes exclaiming that the Gowrow had escaped and they had better run. They did, and he never had to show off his non-existent Gowrow. Randolph was among these children and stated that preceding the entrance was a drawing of the Gowrow eating an entire family of farmers. Before the man would run on stage screaming, a terrifying roar would come from behind the curtain. Gunshots would be heard, and then he would emerge in his tattered clothes.

Randolph thought enough about the Gowrow that he devoted three pages to it in his book *We Always Lie to Strangers: Tall Tales from the Ozarks*. The Gowrow might have been forgotten if not for a follow-up incident in 1927 that occurred upon the exploration of Diamond Cave. The cave was discovered by Samuel Hudson when his hunting dogs ran into the cave and

were killed by a bear. In the year 1925, it opened up to tourists and became quite popular and eventually sported a campground, a hotel/restaurant, an outdoor pavilion, and a skating rink. It's enough to make one wonder if the below article was written merely to draw in more tourists... [\[46\]](#)

BOTTOMLESS PIT

MYSTIFIES SOUTH

North Arkansas Folk Believe Strange Beast Has Lair There

The Boone limestone which underlies the northern tier of Arkansas counties holds within its stratified recesses many secrets that have not been and may never be revealed. Geologists assure us that the Ozark uplift, of which the Boone limestone is a part, is one of the oldest mountainous areas of the country—much older than the Rockies or the Appalachians. In the early Miocene, or was it the Pleistocene? Really, it doesn't matter, being only a question of a few million years—in some undetermined pre-historic age this Ozark region was upheaved from the primeval seas by some great convulsion of nature. There are multiplied evidences readily deciphered by geologists that prove the ancient origin of these lands, says a writer in the *Arkansas Gazette*.

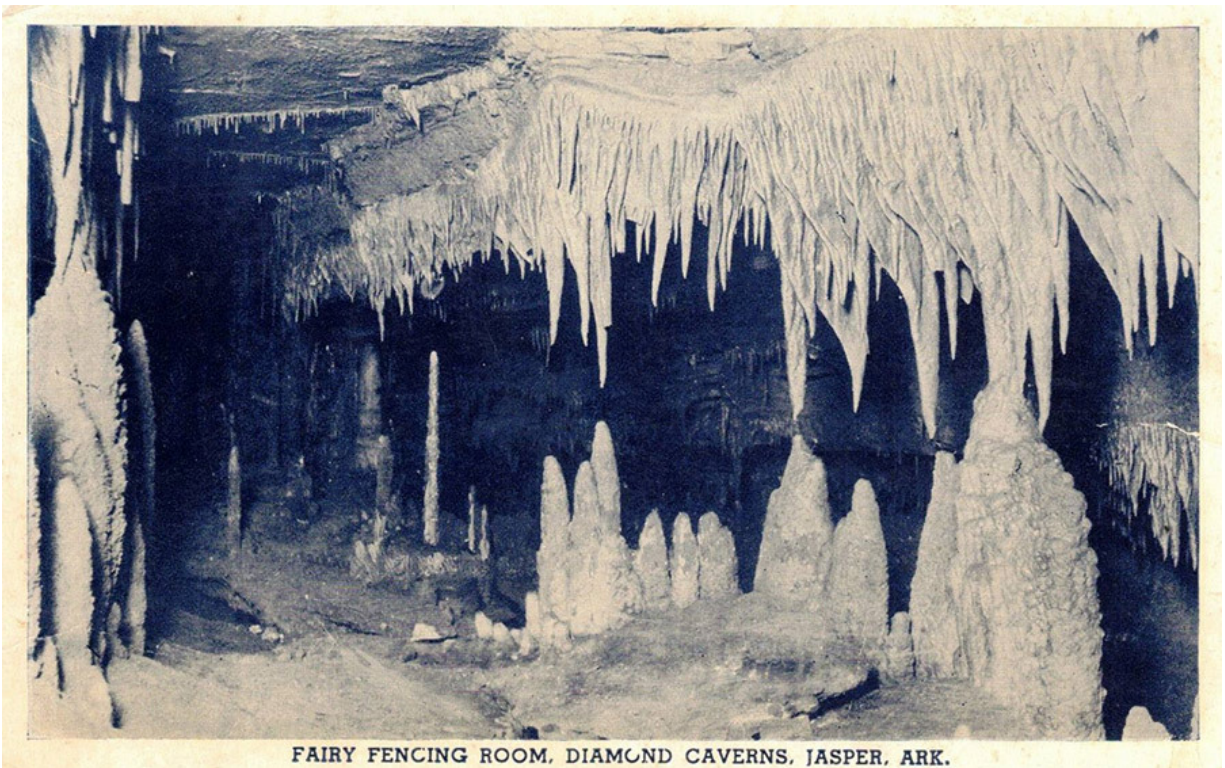
Among the phenomena, of this district are the caverns that honeycomb the limestone hills. Only a few of them, comparatively, are known and have been explored. The largest and most wonderful of these is Diamond Cave, located in Newton County, near Jasper. It is one of the most remarkable caverns in the world, but it is not our purpose to attempt a description here. It is worthy a volume, and some day someone will have the vision to have such a book published. There are several other, but smaller known caverns, filled with stalactic formations, and scores of others shrouded in mystery. These are found in Boone, Newton, Matron, Baxter and adjacent counties, and some of them have been known for many years.

Cave Used for Refrigeration

There is a blowing cave in Searcy County so cold that it is used for refrigeration. There are caves in which vari-colored marbles are found in almost inexhaustible quantities. These Ozark caverns are richer than many others in stalactite and stalagmite formation, caused by the water dripping through limestone for countless ages. The sand caves of Kentucky, such as that in which Floyd Collins was lost, and Mammoth Cave are lacking in the sheer beauty of crystal deposits which makes Diamond Cave unequaled in grandeur. The celebrated Wind Cave in South Dakota is only a narrow, muddy fissure in the earth, extending for a distance of half a mile to two miles, and lacking wholly in crystal formations. And yet it has been made a national park, and thousands of visitors pay 50 cents each for the privilege of threading its muddy passages. A similar amount expended upon the road from Jasper to Diamond Cave and in the electric lighting and improvement of its passages would make the Newton county cavern the most celebrated in the world, not even excepting the Luray caverns of Virginia.

One of the most mysterious of the unexplored caverns is merely an opening in the side of a flint hill in northern Boone, near Self Postoffice, and only half a mile from the White River branch of the Missouri Pacific. Yet so rugged and difficult of access is its location that comparatively few have even heard of Devil's 'ole.

It is an opening in the hillside, about half way down, come upon unexpectedly. It is about 20-feet across, passing back under the hill at a slight angle. It has never been explored, and its depth is unknown. Jim Summers, a hardy farmer who knows the woods as familiarly as city man knows his golf course and who acted as our guide, assured us that the natives believe it to be bottomless.



FAIRY FENCING ROOM, DIAMOND CAVERNS, JASPER, ARK.

Climbed 300 Feet

So far as known, E. J. Rhodes, an original owner of the land, descended at the end of a rope to a depth of 300 feet years ago. About 200 feet down he had encountered a shelving ledge, and a few feet to one side a funnel-like opening admitted him to a large chamber below. Passing through this he dangled from the end of the rope, suspended in air, unable, to pierce the gloom or determine the extent of the chamber. Fearing the presence of noxious gases, he signaled to be drawn up. No one else has ever descended into the cave on account of the difficulties, a windlass might easily be rigged up across the opening and a venturesome explorer be lowered into its depths. What mysteries it contains, however, must continue to be a mystery until someone has the courage to explore it.

We attempted to sound the hole, and for this purpose carried along a thousand feet of clothesline. Jim Summers said it might be long enough for the purpose. A heavy flatiron was tied to the rope and it was thrown into the opening. Other casts were made, but all were unsuccessful in attaining a greater depth. All efforts to plumb the hole were unavailable. Heavy rocks thrown into it rattled down, down, until the

sounds were lost. Jim saw these experiments proved nothing. It was known that wandering cattle and hogs and undoubtedly wild animals had fallen into the hole, and, of course none had ever been recovered. He pointed out some mysterious tracks leading down by a well-beaten path into the mouth of the cave and volunteered the suggestion that it must have been made by some mysterious “varmint” that made its den in the depths. He suggested that one more effort be made to sound the opening.

Then things began to happen. The next cast of the flatiron carried the weight to the intervening ledge as usual. Then the party of myriad explorers at the mouth of the cave distinctly heard a vicious hissing sound, as if it were by some angry animal whose premises had been rudely invaded. The rope was pulled up and it was found that the handle of the iron had been bent. Jim swore that he could see the marks of teeth upon it. The useless iron was tossed down the opening. A large stone, was then attached as a weight and thrown in. Again the sibilant sound as it struck the ledge, and, when the rope was drawn up the stone was gone. The rope had been bitten in two as clean as though it had been cut by a knife. The Harvard scientist in the party, trained in unsentimental realism, scoffed at the suggestion that some mysterious animal had been awakened in the depths of the cave. He said the rock had cut the rope and broken the iron. But Jim Summers, practical woodsman, only smiled in a deliberate way and, fastening another rock to the rope, cast it again. Again it ran out to the 200-foot ledge, again the hissing sound was heard, and when the rope was drawn up the stone was gone and the rope was found to have been cut in two as clean as by a knife. The marks of two sharp teeth were clearly discernible. For the third time the cast was made and the third time the rope was bitten in two.

Mystery Unsolved

Then the Harvard man admitted that there was something mysterious about it and that there might be some sort of mysterious animal down there. Jim Summers averred it might be the wampus cat^[47] as several specimens of that animal had been seen in the vastnesses of northern Boone. The Harvard man was inclined to his theory that it was a goofus, or Lewis Carroll’s bandersnatch, or the frumious Jabberwock,

possibly the last surviving member of the brontosauri. The more credulous member of the party said she would not be surprised should it prove to be the spirit of a Cherokee chief, who, according to tradition, last chased a black bear into Devil's Hole once upon a time. The retired journalist, however, finally advanced a theory that seemed to offer the most plausible explanation. He said the animal was undoubtedly the long-lost gowrow of the goofus family, and genus canard. He recalled that the gowrow, supposed by many to be a mythical animal, was first seen in 1897 by one William Miller, near Blanca Calf Creek township, Searcy county, about 100 miles southeast. At that time it was reported to be slaughtering cattle, horses, hogs, dogs and cats by the wholesale, and terrorizing the whole countryside. A posse was organized and the animal tracked to an enormous cave near a lake. The retired journalist took from his pocket a copy of the veracious chronicle as published in the *Arkansas Gazette* at the time, with a photograph of the horrific beast, and read the following description to the amazement of the hearers.

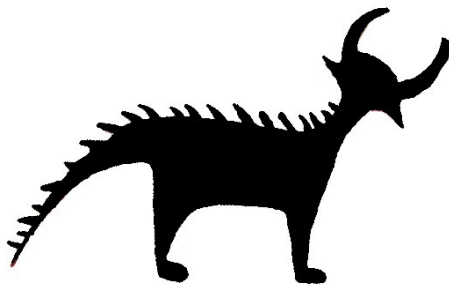
Though I wouldn't typically reprint that portion of the article here, I will this time because it offers a different version of events than what is present in the original article with the differentiations emboldened by me:

"This cave was evidently the home of the animal as here were found many skeletons, skulls and bones, **as well as parts of human flesh of recent victims**, but the monster had not returned to its lair. Miller and his posse laid in wait, trembling in their shoes. **Presently the earth was swayed as if another San Francisco earthquake were taking place.** The waters of the lake began to splash and more like the movement of the ocean waves, when they realize that the monster was approaching. As it came within range, all hands fired, and, after several volleys were discharged, succeeded in killing it. But it died hard. A couple of huge trees on the bank were lashed down and **one of the assailants was killed by it a before it breathed its last.** ^[48]

At this point, the same description Miller gives in the original article is repeated with no differences, so we will now skip ahead to the end of the 1927 article. Also, the end of the article was in poor shape and difficult to read, hence many indecipherable words marked as such.

Having finished reading this circumstantial account in the columns of the Gazette which he conveniently carried with him, the retired journalist looked about with concealed in their [indecipherable] as much as to say: if you had [indecipherable] the Gazette it must be so,” he answered an obvious objection by explaining that the gowrow had only feigned death and as soon as [indecipherable] murderous posse left had [indecipherable] to Devil’s hole, where it had lived ever since. [CHESTER TIMES—CHESTER, PA. TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 8, 1927]

As I stated in the introduction, the Gowrow is more than likely just a folkloric monster rather than a remnant dinosaur. But, affording this creature the same respect we afford the other cryptids in this book, let us examine just what the Gowrow could be.



The closest thing to a Gowrow I can find is the Agawa Rock Pictographs in Lake Superior in Canada. The pictographs were believed to have been drawn in the 17th and 18th centuries by the Ojibwe Indians. One of them famously portrays a horned dinosaur. Indian agent and geologist Henry Rowe Schoolcraft investigated the area and learned of a monster called the *Unktehi* from the Sioux in

1850. They described it as a creature similar to a gigantic ox with horns, while other tribes said it was a serpent with legs and a notched backbone and heavy spiked tail.

Though William Miller seems to be trying to make the Gowrow out to be an Ice Age survivor from the Miocene era in the original article, the creature sounds much more like something from the Ankylosaur family, which were herbivores unlike the carnivorous Gowrow. Apart from that detail, they match up fairly well with the size and descriptions of the Gowrow.

The fact that the Gowrow lived along a river should also not be ignored. In fact, Diamond Cave isn’t terribly far from the White River in the scheme

of things. And, the White River is home to Arkansas' most famous cryptid, the White River Monster.



White River Monster.

Supposedly the creature dates back to the Civil War, but it didn't become popular until the mid-1930s. A photo snapped of the monster seems to show a rather spiky backside, not dissimilar to the Gowrow, which Miller claimed traversed through the water. In a 1971 sighting, the White River Monster was said to have a bone-like protrusion coming from out of its forehead. And, considering the creature leaves three-toed tracks, this would seem to

imply it has feet rather than fins. Perhaps the White River Monster and the Gowrow are one and the same?

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“Snaik Stories”

A HYBRID ANIMAL

Does this article from the December 6, 1890, *Logansport Reporter* tell of a baby dinosaur?

A strange animal.

There is on exhibition at Klinsick's drugstore a strange hybrid animal that no one has yet named. It resembles originally an eel and is about 12 inches long. It has 24 legs as the only means of locomotion, and where its gears might be are two fins that are doubtless to be used in swimming in the water. The queer thing was found by a man named Fred Taylor while ditching on Messenger's farm in Noble Township. He came across it about 4 feet below the surface. Reptile is hard to classify.

THE MORMONS AND THE MONSTER

UTAH'S BEAR LAKE MONSTER

THE MORMON PIONEER is unquestionably one of the great staples of the American West. The Mormon pioneers migrated westward to Utah after it became a territory of the U.S. following the Mexican American War in 1846. The Mormons had decided to relocate after the assassination of their leader, Joseph Smith, in Carthage, Illinois in 1844. A huge wagon train of 70,000 settlers set off for the west in April of 1847. As they traveled along the shores of Bear Lake in Utah, they saw some rather strange things in the water. And this wasn't just the "common folk", but even Wilford Woodruff and John Taylor, future presidents of the church, saw the monster.



Landscape painting of Bear Lake Monster chasing swimmers. Utah State University Libraries Special Collections and Archives. Folk Collection 4 No 9.

Eventually, Brigham Young (president of the church since 1847 after Smith's death) would become involved in a quest to solve the mystery of the Bear Lake monster.

Though Young undoubtedly had to hear of the monster, or rather monsters, in Bear Lake, he didn't begin to take a direct interest in the matter until the mid-1870s. He must have known about it before then though. Take for example the below article published by the *Desert News* on July 31, 1868.

The Indians have a tradition concerning a strange, serpent-like creature inhabiting the waters of Bear Lake, which they say carried off some of their braves many moons ago. Since then, they will not sleep close to the lake. Neither will they swim in it, nor let their squaws and papooses bathe in it.

Now, it seems this water devil, as the Indians called it, has again made an appearance. A number of our white settlers declare they have seen it with their own eyes. This Bear Lake Monster, they now call it, is causing a great deal of excitement up here. S. M. Johnson at South Eden was riding along near the Lake the other day when he saw something a number of yards out in the lake which he thought was the body of a man. He waited for the waves to wash it in, but to his surprise, found the water washed over it without causing it to move. Then he saw it had a head and neck like some strange animal. On each side of the head were ears, or bunches the size of a pint cup. He concluded the body must be touching the bottom of the lake. By this time, however, Johnson seems to have been leaving the place so rapidly he failed to observe other details.

The next day three women and a man saw a monstrous animal in the lake near the same place, but this time it was swimming at an incredible speed. According to their statement, it was moving faster than a horse could run.

On Sunday last, N. C. Davis and Allen Davis of St. Charles; Thomas Sleight and James Collings of Paris, with six women were returning from Fish Haven when about midway from the latter place to St.

Charles, their attention was suddenly attracted to a peculiar motion of waves on the water about three miles distant. The lake was not rough, only a little disturbed by the wind. Mr. Sleight says he distinctly saw the sides of a very large animal that he would suppose to be not less than 90 feet in length. Mr. Davis...is positive it must not have been less than forty feet in length, judging by the waves it rolled up on both sides of it as it swam, and the wave it left in the rear. It was going south, and all agreed it swam with a speed almost incredible to their senses. Mr. Davis says he never saw a locomotive travel faster, and thinks it made a mile a minute. In a few minutes after the discovery of the first, a second followed in its wake, but seemed much smaller, appearing to Mr. Sleight about the size of a horse. A larger one followed this, and so on until before disappearing, made a sudden turn to the west a short distance, then back to its former track. At this turn Mr. Sleight says he could distinctly see it was of a brown color. They could judge somewhat of the speed by observing known distances on the opposite side of the lake; and all agree that the velocity with which these monsters propelled themselves, was astounding. They represent the waves rolling up on each side as about three feet high. This is substantially their statement as they told me. Messrs. Davis and Sleight are prominent men, well known in the country, and all of them are reliable persons, whose veracity is undoubted. I have no doubt they would be willing to make affidavits to their statements.

Even *The Latter-day Saints' Millennial Star*, a Mormon publication, ran a report on the monster in Vol. 30 in 1868:

THE MONSTERS OF BEAR LAKE.

We have had conversation with brother Charles C. Rich and other brethren from Bear Lake Valley, respecting the monsters which have been seen in the Lake, an account of which, from the pen of brother Joseph C. Rich, was published in the *Evening News* a short time ago. They all firmly believe the account as published. They consider the testimony that has been given by so many individuals, who have seen these creatures in so many places and under a variety of circumstances, indisputable. They would believe these persons upon any other subject, and they cannot withhold their credence—incredible as the existence of such monsters may appear—from what they say they saw in the Lake.

We should conclude that there are very few, if any, persons in Bear Lake Valley who doubt the statements which have been made. The Indians' traditions corroborate all that has been said of these creatures. It is well known that the Indians will not camp near the Lake, and they have never been known to bathe in its waters. They have persisted in stating that there were terrible monsters in the Lake, of which they were in fear, two of their tribe having, within the memory of some of their number, been carried off by them. If one or two persons only had seen and described them, it might be set down, even if they were persons of good judgment and credibility, as an optical delusion; but they have been lately seen by numbers, and at different times and places, and their descriptions agree, and they also agree with the accounts of the Indians. Various plans have been suggested for the capture of one or more of them, but no attempt has as yet been made. We hope that some plan may be devised that will be successful. Until the question of their existence is settled, and something learned of their nature and habits, if such monsters are actually there, the Lake will not be a very common place of resort for fishermen. One of those who are said to have seen them last, timed their speed while passing from one well known point to another on the other side of the Lake, with his watch, and if the description can be relied upon, a boat would stand no chance of escaping if they were pursued or came in contact with it. Our readers who are familiar with the accounts we have published of these creatures, can form their own conclusions respecting them. The accounts are fishy, decidedly so; but we cannot dispute the persons who make them. Some of the persons who have seen them we know, and their truthfulness is unquestionable. We must believe they saw something remarkable, whether monsters or not we hope time will soon decide.

The above article makes it clear that the Bear Lake Monster was not merely newspaper entertainment in the vein of "snake stories", but was regarded by the settlers to be a very real threat. This article also contains what may be the first mention of plans to capture the monster. Most sources seem to imply that the monster capture operation went into effect at some point in the mid-1870s. The impetus was supposedly a letter written to Brigham Young by another church leader, William Budge, who

saw the monster with two companions on May 18, 1874. After receiving the letter Young partnered with a Mr. Phineas W. Cook to capture the creature.
[\[49\]](#)

In truth, Cook had been endeavoring to capture the monster for some time, as evidenced by this article written all the way back in 1869. On September 30, 1869, the *Desert News* published the following:

PLANS FOR ITS CAPTURE.

Mr. Cook, “the Lord being his helper,” proposes to capture one of these anomalies next summer, not being fixed for the business at present. His plan is to have a large bearded hook made, to which will be attached about twenty feet of cable chain and three hundred yards of inch rope. At the end of the rope will be a large buoy with a flagstaff inserted, and a sinker to keep the staff in a perpendicular position. The stars and stripes will float from the staff. To this buoy will be connected a hundred yards of three-quarter rope, which will be fastened to the switch end of a tree on the shore. The hook being baited with a leg of mutton or a young Indian,[\[50\]](#) and allowed to sink twenty feet in the water by means of a smaller buoy, completes the plan. When the monster swallows the bait, he will necessarily take in a few yards of the cable chain; this will prevent him from biting off the rope, and as the cable will no doubt be heavy on his stomach, he will back out, which will have the effect of fastening the hook into his vitals. About this time there will be some tall squirming and pulling; if anything breaks it must be the small rope between the flag buoy and the beach. He has still nine hundred feet of rope to play on, and the large buoy can be followed by the flag all over the lake, or until he concludes to give up the ghost. Mr. Cook is sanguine of success. Others propose erecting dead falls at different places in the lake. If these plans all fail, I shall draw one of them up near the shore with a spyglass and harpoon it; or, will sub-let the capturing business to N. F. Austin, who will run the lake through a fine strainer, and starve him to death for want of water.

Apparently, Cook’s plan was never carried out until the intervention of Brigham Young after hearing Budge’s report in 1874. Cook simply lacked the huge rope needed, and Young provided it. Young didn’t just furnish the needed materials for the safety of the Mormon settlers near the lake, Young

and Cook would split the profits were the monster to be caught and then sold to a rich individual, museum, or circus.

Cook hired a blacksmith to fashion his giant hook which he baited with a large chunk of meat just as he had promised to do years ago. Obviously, Cook never caught the monster. A disappointed Young wrote him a letter on August 24, 1876, to ask for his rope back.

Cook responded, “You furnished me rope etc. to catch the serpent in the lake at halves. I spent my time faithfully during the season but did not succeed.” Cook goes on to claim that he had made efforts to return the rope but that Young had kept him waiting in the capital. The dispute ended when Young passed away the following year in 1877.



Brigham Young.

Many believe the Bear Lake Monster to have been a hoax began by land surveyor and newspaper writer, Joseph Rich—the son of Bear Lake’s

founding father Charles C. Rich. Whether the sightings were the invention of Rich or not, they continued on into the modern-day. In the 1930s, when the Loch Ness Monster caused a publicity stir due to the “Surgeon’s Photo” of 1934, some residents foolishly speculated that there was an underground tunnel linking Loch Ness in Scotland with Bear Lake! Today Bear Lake embraces their strange history and centers several events and festivals on their strange denizen of the deep.

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THE PIASA PTERODACTYL

REAL LIFE HORROR BEHIND THE LEGEND

THE PIASA BIRD isn't necessarily dinosaurian, it looks more like a mythical monster than a pterodactyl. It was discovered by a Jesuit Priest in 1673 along the Mississippi River in Illinois. As the priest journeyed down the river he was startled by the sight of two devilish, giant petroglyphs. Of the first, only a monstrous head remained (the rest had eroded away) but the second presented a strange quadruped bird monster with antlers and a man-like head.

Over the years other explorers would come to see it and it was determined, between all the reports, that the petroglyph was 80 feet high up the cliff and about 30 feet long and 12 feet tall. The petroglyph was unfortunately destroyed in 1856 due to disturbances from a nearby quarry which caused it to shatter and tumble down the cliff.

More information about the mythical beast was obtained from the Illini Indians, who called it the Piasa, or, 'the bird that devours man'. The natives insisted that the beasts were real at one point and terrorized their ancestors until all were killed. Though they don't look terribly like pterosaurs, many cryptozoologists maintain that the Piasa bird could be an abstract representation of such a beast.

In digging through various old newspaper accounts, I found a specific dragon legend from the state of Illinois that was based upon the Piasa. The article from the *Alton Telegraph* from July 1, 1875, recounts a rather interesting history of the animal according to Native Americans.

AN ILLINOIS DRAGON

An Indian Legend that May Have Had a Foundation in Truth.

Some 30 or 40 years ago, I heard of an Indian tradition that had been related by old Indian chiefs to the French Jesuit priest who traveled through this Western region in the early day – a tradition that made a profound impression upon my mind, not so much because of its credibility, as that the Illinois Indians placed great stress upon it. The legend as I now recall it, ran something like this:

Down on the banks of the Illinois River, not far from the point where that stream unites its waters with those of the Mississippi, there is a steep, rocky cliff, of considerable height, and about midway between the base of this perpendicular precipice and its top there is a hole, which, as is alleged, is the entrance to a cave, which, owing to its inaccessibility, has never been explored by any human being, nor can it be without the aid of a balloon. I cannot vouch for the fact of the existence of such a cave there, but such was evidently the earnest belief of the Indians who were here in the early day of our Western history, as was well known to the first explorers of the Mississippi Valley.

Well, according to the tradition of the aborigines, hundreds and thousands of years ago, this rock cave on the river's bank was inhabited by a peculiar monster – a winged serpent of huge dimensions. It was the habit of this dragon, which in appearance somewhat resembled the Satan of our boyish superstition, to sally forth daily, in pursuit of his favorite food – Indian. Emerging from this cave, he would fly out upon the plains, and, watching his opportunity, would suddenly swoop down upon the first Indian whom he discovered, seize him in his talons, carry him off to his rocky cave, and make a feast of him. He captured and devoured one Indian every day, and became a great terror to all the Indian community. He was their enemy, was decimating their numbers and they knew not at what moment any of them might fall into his insatiable clutches.

This thing after many years of dread and anxiety, was becoming intolerable. Something must be done to conquer or destroy the winged devil, they said, lest in time he would exterminate their entire tribe. Finally, at a meeting of the tribe, ten of the young Braves volunteered to risk their lives in a determined effort to destroy the dragon. These ten organized themselves into a band, and each of them armed with a bow and quiver filled with poison arrows, proceeded in the right time to the vicinity of the cave, on the opposite side of the river. They

watched the aperture in the rocky precipice, and in pursuance of a prearranged plan, when the winged monster made his appearance at day-dawn, one of their number exposed himself on the open prairie, all the other nine secreted themselves nearby. The monster flapped his wings, flew out into the wide expanse of low river bottom, and, discovering a live Indian all alone, at first eyed him eagerly and hungrily; then, concluding that he had his game handy, swooped down to clutch the victim, when instantly all the braves opened fire upon him with their poisoned arrows, striking him all over his ugly body. He failed to reach his expected prey, and wounded and foiled, laboriously flapped himself back to his river's bank, and reentered his hole in the rocky steep. And this – so ran the Legend – was the last that was ever seen of the great dragon. He probably died in the cave from the poison of the many arrows that pierced him. Henceforth the Indians had no common enemy until the troublesome white man came among them with the “firewater.”

The Indians who dwelt in Illinois when the first white settlers arrived here, believed the story religiously, and possibly there was a foundation of truth in it. I have recently been glancing through some of the official reports of the naturalists who, during the last two summers have been examining the natural history of the great basin of the Rocky Mountains, and find therein that, among many other fossiliferous discoveries, the remains of just such monsters as that of this Illinois Indian tradition were found. The report of Prof. Marsh mentions the finding of the remains of winged serpents of vast size, measuring 20 feet from tip to tip of their wings. The reading of this fact in these reports has recalled to my mind this Indian tradition, and I beg leave to submit it to the scientific people, and to ask the question whether the Indians of Illinois did not, and their ancient history, really have a veritable dragon – to “make them afraid,” as was alleged in the legend which I have in my weak way endeavored to revive. I am too old a man now – seventy-one years – to undertake the exploration of the rocky formation – if there really be such – in the lower Illinois; but I trust that somebody may be induced to look into the matter – or, rather, to look into the cave and that rocky cliff, if there be such, and tell us what there is in it. Possibly the remains of the winged devil of the Illinois Indians may even now be found therein. – *Chicago Journal*.

The readers of the TELEGRAPH will recognize in the above description merely another version of the famous Piasa legend. The writer, however, is mistaken in locating the cave above the mouth of the Illinois. The home of the dragon, if such there were, was, doubtless, immediately above the city, near the perpendicular cliff on which was painted the wonderful picture of the Piasa bird. The cliff was just above the penitentiary. It is well-known to old settlers that a cave, which contained many Indian skeletons, also existed near the painting on the cliff, and it was popularly supposed to have been the home of the hybrid bird – Dragon. In confirmation of the appearance of the monster as described in the above legend, we will state that, over 200 years ago, Father Marquette, in his account of his first exploration of the river, in 1673 gives a description of the monsters (for there were two) painted on this cliff. He describes the locality as below the mouth of the Illinois and about four miles above the mouth of the Missouri. The following is his bloodcurdling picture, which we transcribed:

“They (the monsters) are as large as a calf, with horns on the head like a deer, a fearful look, red eyes, bearded like a tiger, the face somewhat like a man’s, the body covered with scales, and the tail so long that it makes twice the turn of the body, passing over the head and down between the legs, and ending at last in a fish’s tail.”

That is the picture Father Marquette saw painted on our Alton Bluffs in 1673. It is a great pity that the utilitarian pioneers of Alton blasted away this cliff for building stone, and thus effaced the most wonderful relic of a past age that should have been found on the continent.

FATE

MAGAZINE

TRUE STORIES OF THE
STRANGE AND THE UNKNOWN

March 1954 35¢

MONSTER
ON THE
ROCK



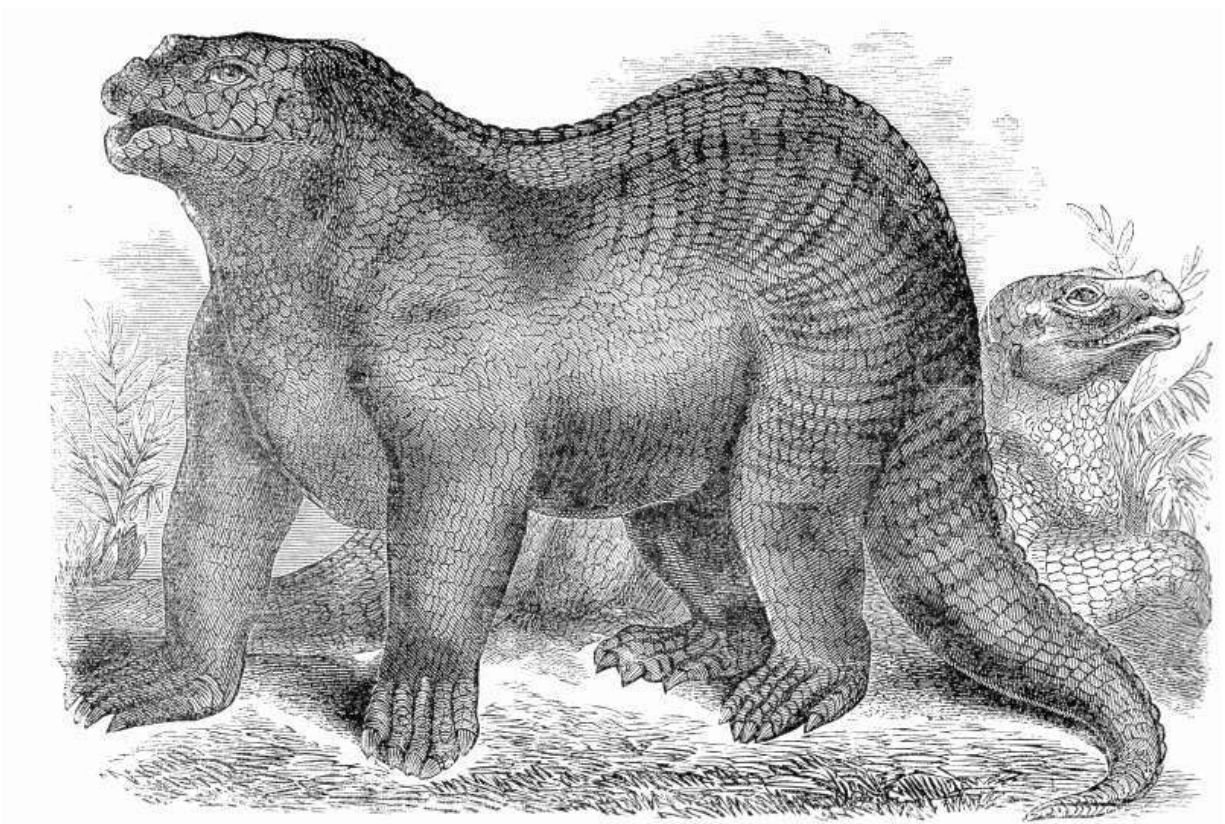
THE COUPLE WHO LIVED TWICE
TELEPHONE BETWEEN WORLDS

THE DRAGON OF DEATH VALLEY

AN IGUANODON IN THE 19TH CENTURY

THOUGH OVERSHADOWED today by tyrannosaurs and velociraptors, back in its day the Iguanodon was one of the better-known dinosaurs. This is in large part because it is the first dinosaur to ever be recognized and named by modern man. The first Iguanodon fossil was discovered by Mary Ann Mantell, the wife of a country doctor, while her husband was out on a call in England in 1822. Or so legend says, some say that's something of a folktale and that Dr. Mantell himself found the teeth of the ancient beast. Whoever found them, the doctor thought that the teeth belonged to a giant crocodile!

After it was officially recognized by science as an Iguanodon, the beast became quite popular. It was one of the more famous dinosaur sculptures made by Benjamin Waterhouse Hawkins. On New Year's Eve of 1853, he even held a dinner party on the inside of his Iguanodon sculpture! Hawkins invited 21 guests, all men (several of them scientists), to enjoy an eight-course meal within the model. ^[51]



19th Century depiction of Iguanodon.

Due to the creature's popularity at the time (as far as dinosaurs went anyways), it's somewhat surprising that it took someone until 1892 to claim a live sighting of such a beast. I suppose what I'm trying to say is, as common as Iguanodon bones were, that particular species of dinosaur would be a good candidate for a faux sighting as opposed to pterosaurs and plesiosaurs—the usual suspects in the realm of remnant dinosaurs. And, if you were to concoct such a hoax, why not set it somewhere like Death Valley?

The valley was so named in 1849 by miners during the California Gold Rush.^{[\[52\]](#)} Local legend—via the Timbisha Shoshone Indians—says that Death Valley was once a lush and beautiful valley ruled over by a beautiful but vain queen. She wanted to build a temple rivaling that of the Aztecs to the south and forced her people to work unceasingly—even her own daughter! In her dying breath, the daughter cursed her mother and nature then revolted against the queen. The sun's rays became so hot that Death Valley transformed into the harsh desert that we know today. Add to this that there is rumored to be a lost, underground city of giants in Death Valley

and you have one very strange place.^[53] All it was really lacking was a good dinosaur sighting...

FOUND AN IGUANODON

CALIFORNIA POSSESSES

PREHISTORIC MONSTER

A Geologist Reports the Existence of a Live Jurassic Reptile— Remarkable Discovery Made In Death Valley.

The San Francisco Examiner publishes a statement made by George May in relation to a huge reptile that had been seen near Daggett.^[54] E. W. Spear had discovered a peculiar trail and, following it came upon a [giant] creature, unlike anything he had ever had the pleasure of meeting. He describes it as thirty feet long and thoroughly unprepossessing. Spear withdrew without formality, and told his story, only to be laughed at. Later Henry Brown saw the monster, and Mr. Brown scratched the desert sands right hastily in retreat. At the time Mr. May left Daggett a party was being organized to hunt the strange denizen of the valley.

Oscar W. Clark, who has been spending some time in Daggett and who has been making geological researches along the coast in the interest of the Royal Academy of Sciences, was on his way to Coronado to take a rest. Mr. Clark has made a number of journeys into Death Valley desert and was one of the parties who saw this gigantic monster.

He has sent the result of his experiences to the Smithsonian institution with a view to having a party sent out here to endeavor to capture the monster.

“The announcement of the experiences of Messrs. Spear and Brown rather anticipated me,” said Mr. Clark recently. “I had a fine opportunity of seeing this strange denizen of, that mysterious land known as Death Valley desert; and I desire to say that this animal is the

most wonderful living proof of the exact authenticity of the researches made by savants into the field of paleontological study.

“This animal is really the only living link between prehistoric times and the present. It is virtually a marvel of the ages, an eighth wonder of the world,^[55] a marvelous illustration of the profound economy of nature. It was six weeks ago that I had the pleasure of seeing this remarkable animal. I was some thirty miles distant from Daggett and stopped at 6 o’clock in the evening to rest having made some valuable additions to my collection of fossil remains.

“Happening to glance to the southwest through the haze peculiar to the desert, I saw a strange body moving along about one mile away. I went toward it and was soon both elated and horrified... by seeing an animal fully thirty feet long that differed from any of the known forms of the present epoch. It was an immense monster, walking part of the time on its hind feet and at times dragging itself through the sand and leaving tracks of a three-toed foot and a peculiar scratchy configuration in the sand whenever it changed its form of locomotion and dragged itself.

The forelimbs of the animal were extremely short and it occasionally grasped the nearest scrub and devoured it. The thumb of the three-pronged forefoot was evidently a strong, conical spine that would be a dangerous weapon of attack. Whenever the animal stood upright it was fully fourteen feet high.

The head was as large as a good-sized cask and was shaped somewhat like a horse, while the body was as large as that of an elephant, with a long tail extending from the hindquarters something like that of an alligator.

When I saw it the strange animal was on the edge of a great sinkhole of alkaline water—a sinkhole by the way, that my guides told me was a bottomless pit; and evidently a remnant of the days when Death Valley was an inland sea.^[56] I approached within a hundred yards of the monster, crawling cautiously over the sand, and watched it for fully half an hour. Suddenly the beast began to bellow, and the sound was of a most terrifying and blood-curdling character. Its immense eyes fully as large as saucers; projected from the head, and gleamed like a wild, furious fire, while from the enormous mouth of the monster streams of steam-

like vapor, were exhaled, and as they drifted toward one the effluvia was something awful.

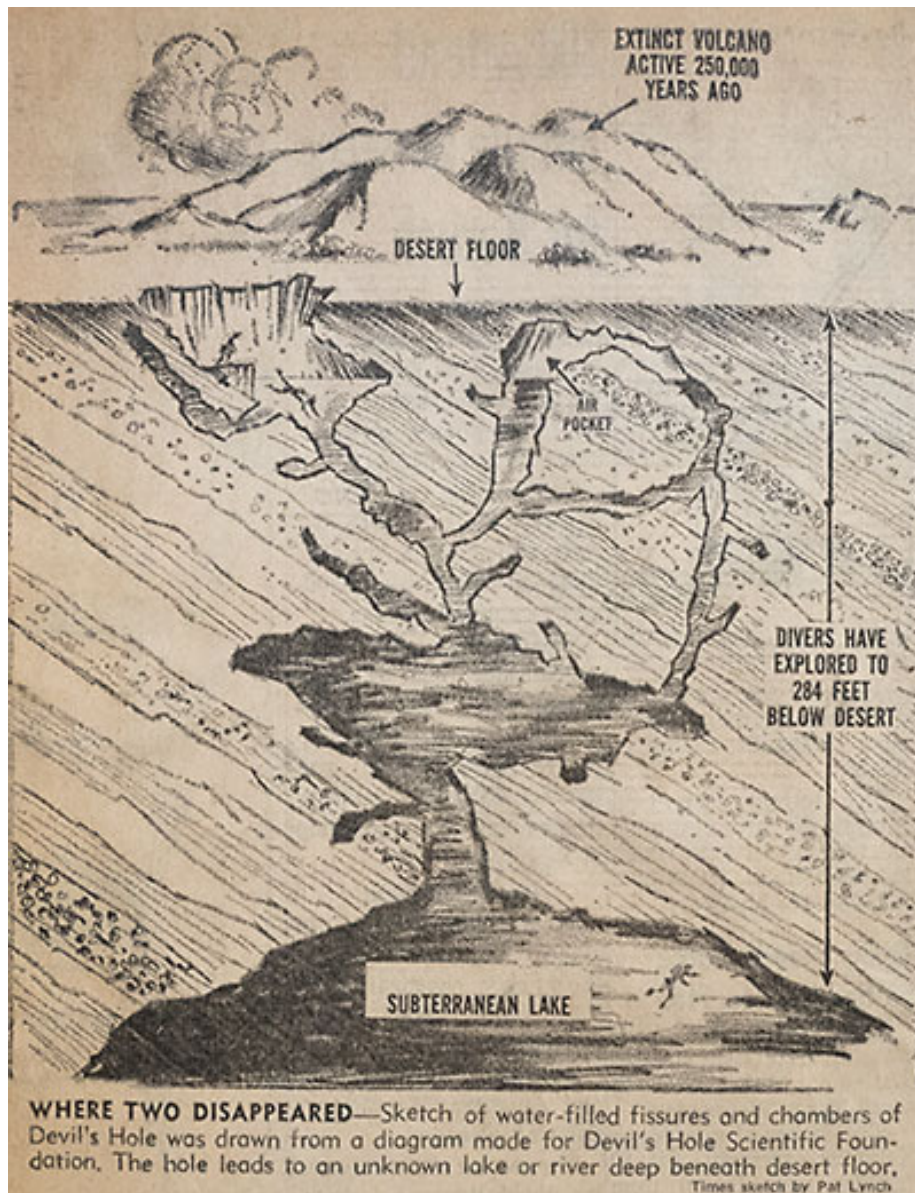
The animal was liver color, with bronze-like spots. The monster dragged itself to the edge of the sinkhole and lashed its tail, and finally fell off into a quiescent condition. I left the scene and attempted to secure the assistance of my guides in an effort to capture the monster, but they were absolutely terrified and refused to do anything.

From what I saw of the animal I am perfectly satisfied that it is one of the species of the *Iguanodon bennisi-santensis*, of the European Jurassic, an animal presenting many points of structure in common with the iguana of to-day. In fact, that is the report that I have sent in and knowing full well the geological environments of the Pacific slope and the very remarkable and peculiar condition regarding the Death Valley section, I am satisfied that my deductions are correct and that there is to-day living in the desert of Death Valley one of the most remarkable animals now on the face of the globe, none other than one of the monsters of the prehistoric epoch—a wonder of the centuries.

To begin breaking down the sighting (which took place in the spring of 1892), I was at first encouraged that Clark observed the *Iguanodon* in a bipedal stance. Initially, *Iguanodons* were thought of as only quadrupeds. I hoped that perhaps this had not yet been discovered yet, and would thus give the sighting at least a shred of credibility.^[57] But alas, it was Louis Dollo who discovered that the dinosaur could also be a biped when he examined a complete skeleton found in a Belgian coal mine in 1878. Dollo published this then remarkable find in 1882, a full ten years before this article was published. All in all, Clark describes the animal perfectly, right down to the 30-foot length—remember, this is rather conservative compared to the other beasts in this book reported to be 100 feet long. Then again, it wouldn't be hard for Clark to describe the creature spot-on as the *Iguanodon* was one of the better-known dinos of its day.

Furthermore, in researching this sighting, I could not verify that any of the names given corresponded to real people. Odder still, this incident seems to be completely unknown or ignored in cryptozoology circles and an internet search will yield nothing but the original sighting.^[58] The timing of Clark's visit could either be considered encouraging or suspect depending on how one looks at it. As it was, the year before the article ran, the Death Valley

Expedition of the U.S. biological survey had occurred in 1891. From the same spot where Clark claimed to see the monster was also collected a rare, new species of pupfish called *Cyprinodon diabolis*.^[59] So, in 1892 the idea of discovering new, unique animal-life in Death Valley could have easily seeped into the imagination of a late 19th-century writer.



As one last aside, the sinkhole where Clark had his sighting was most likely Devil's Hole. And what a perfect place it was to set a prehistoric monster sighting. It actually lines right up with the explanations given for surviving dinosaurs in 1950s era B-movies, where some bespectacled

scientist would claim the remnant dinosaur survived extinction by hiding underground. Technically, Devil's Hole is a geothermal pool with waters that keep a near-constant salinity and temperature of 92 °F or 33 °C. Considering the bottom has yet to be found, it's the perfect place for a monster.

Furthermore, Devil's Hole is an encouraging name for a monster sighting for reasons you may not consider. According to Loren Coleman in his seminal *Mysterious America*, many places with “devil names” were named so due to supernatural phenomena observed there. And indeed, there are some Native American legends corresponding to Devil's Hole. Unfortunately, none of them can really be linked to the Iguanodon sighting. The only link, tedious though it may be, are tales of the giant *Tso'apittse*, who lived within mountain springs and caves, and who would eat people. However, *Tso'apittse* was most likely not a dinosaur, but a cannibal giant humanoid common to Native American mythology.^[60]

But, strange things continued to happen in Devil's Hole even into the 20th Century. In 1965 four high school students went scuba diving into the hole. Two of them never resurfaced from what the paper's called a “mysterious fossil water portal”. No bodies were ever found. All that turned up was a diving mask, a snorkel, and a flashlight tied to a ledge 100 feet below the surface. Some conspiracy theorists even theorized the hole was an underwater portal to another dimension or time period—perhaps the prehistoric past? That same decade, Charles Manson also became infatuated with Devil's Hole, thinking it was literally a portal to the underworld.

Considering Devil's Hole hosts a group of rare pupfish that shouldn't even exist by scientific standards, could it once have also sheltered an Iguanodon? Whether real or fake (probably the latter in this case), this is the only North American Iguanodon sighting that I know of, though there have been several significant ones in New Guinea. Considering Iguanodons were thought to live in swamps and be herbivores, Death Valley would seem an unlikely place to find one!^[61] As such, the 1892 story is one that can easily slip into the category of sensational journalism, especially in light of the Iguanodon being one of the more popular dinosaurs of the time.

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“Snaik Stories”

DINO HUNT

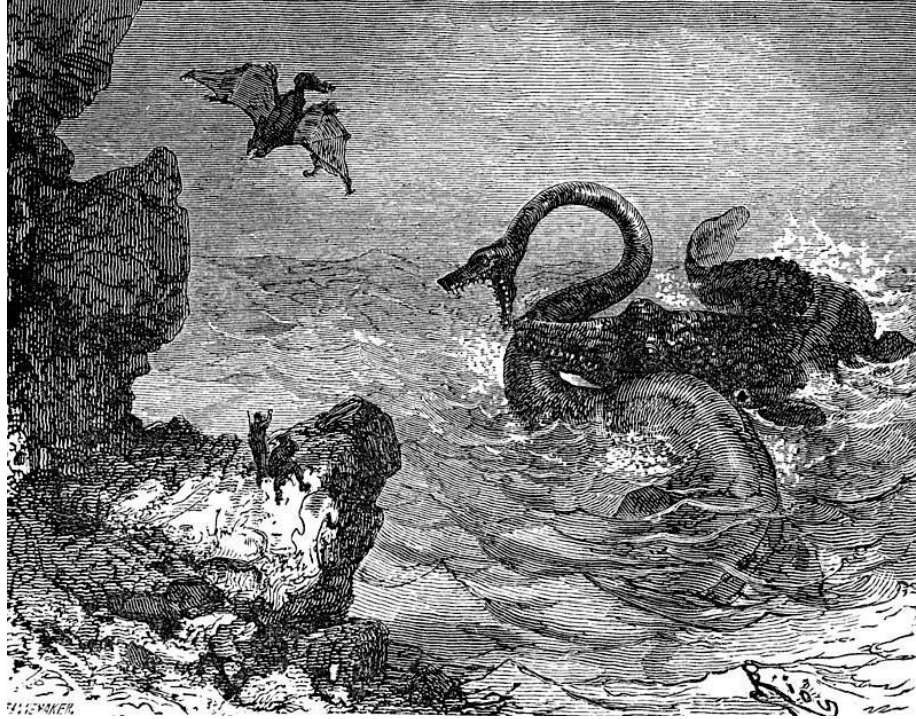
According to a short report in the November 16, 1910, *Star and Sentinel* (out of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania), a strange saurian was shot and killed by Fremont Webster in the woods near Richmond, Indiana: The creature resembles several kinds of reptiles. It has a tail about one and one-half feet long and similar to that of a snake. It has four legs, resembling those of an alligator, except the toes, the ends of which are hooked like claws. Its body is like that of a lizard, only much larger than those seen in that section and covered with a tough skin. On its back is a furlike ridge. The head is very large, resembling a fish, while under the head and attached to the throat is a large pouch. The animal measures five feet in length and weighs about eighteen pounds. It has been presented to the Earlham College Museum.



PREHISTORIC TERROR OF MAMMOTH CAVE

A REAL LIFE JOURNEY TO THE CENTER OF THE EARTH

THE FOLLOWING STORY would seem to be inspired by events that take place in Jules Verne's classic *Journey to the Center of the Earth*, published in 1864. The novel centers on Professor Otto Lidenbrock, his nephew Axel and their strongman Hans. The trio enters a dormant volcano in Iceland and begins a trek all the way to the center of the earth where they encounter a few prehistoric beasts. The most famous of these scenes have the explorers build a raft to sail upon a vast underground ocean where they run across an angry plesiosaurus locked in deadly combat with another sea monster.



Scene from Journey to the Center of the Earth.

To a lesser degree, the same thing happens in the following article, portrayed as being truthful and written in 1909. In our story, a pair of spelunkers build a raft of old wood planks and sail it down an underground river. While parked in a section of the cave, a plesiosaur-like creature makes its presence known.

The setting of our story is a cave in the vicinity of Mammoth Spring, Arkansas, the largest spring in the state and the third-largest spring within the Ozark Plateau. The spring is fed by underground rivers that wind through various underground tunnels which are described in our fantastic tale. It was published on Friday, January 22, 1909, in the Iowa paper the *Oelwein Daily Register*.

THRILLING TIME IN DARK CAVE

**MEMBERS OF EXPLORING PARTY ENCOUNTER STRANGE
BEAST WHICH ATTACKS THEM.**

LIKE PREHISTORIC MONSTER

Emits Howl Like Enraged Bull—Eye-Less Fish and Rivers with Opposite Currents Among Wonders at Mammoth Spring, Ark.

Little Rock, Ark.—A thrilling experience in a dark cave of unknown dimensions and origin, which is a natural curiosity in the vicinity of Mammoth Spring, Ark., is being told by a party of pleasure seekers to friends at their homes in Mendon and Ursa, Ill.

Finding of eyeless fish and an encounter with a strange animal which roared like an enraged bull and which, according to the description of the man who saw it, resembled one of the prehistoric monsters, were among the incidents of the subterranean visit.

In the party which ventured to explore the mysteries of the cave were Mr. and Mrs. Albert Eshom of Mendon, Ill.; H.E. Corey and wife of Ursa, Ill.; Mrs. C.W. Curtis of North Vernon, Ind., and John Ryan, a liveryman of Mammoth Spring.

“On entering the tunnel we walked through it for about 600 feet and found that it continued of the same size as at the entrance and that it had several turnings, so that after the first 100 feet daylight was entirely shut out,” said Mr. Eshom in telling of his experience. “Suddenly we came to an abrupt cul-de-sac of solid rock. The bottom was covered with soft mud two inches in depth. By the use of a bicycle lamp we discovered an opening in the rocky wall of the tunnel at the side and low down, about 10 feet high and as much in depth. This orifice was filled with water as clear as crystal, coming to within four feet of the top of the whole.

“With Mr. Corey I decided to enter the second cavern. A raft was constructed from some two-inch planks which had been left near the entrance to the first tunnel by some former visitors, and on this raft we two, with camera, gun and the lamp, crouched and were pushed through the opening in the rocky wall, leaving the remainder of the party with a fire of sticks at the edge of the pool of water.

“This second cavern was about the same size as the first one and, to our surprise, we found the water, which was about six feet deep, had a considerable current leading away from the opening through which we

had entered the cavern. We concluded to follow the left wall and after drifting with the current about 500 feet discovered the cavern had come to an end, the same as the other had done. At the end at the floor was another orifice about six feet square, into which the water poured.

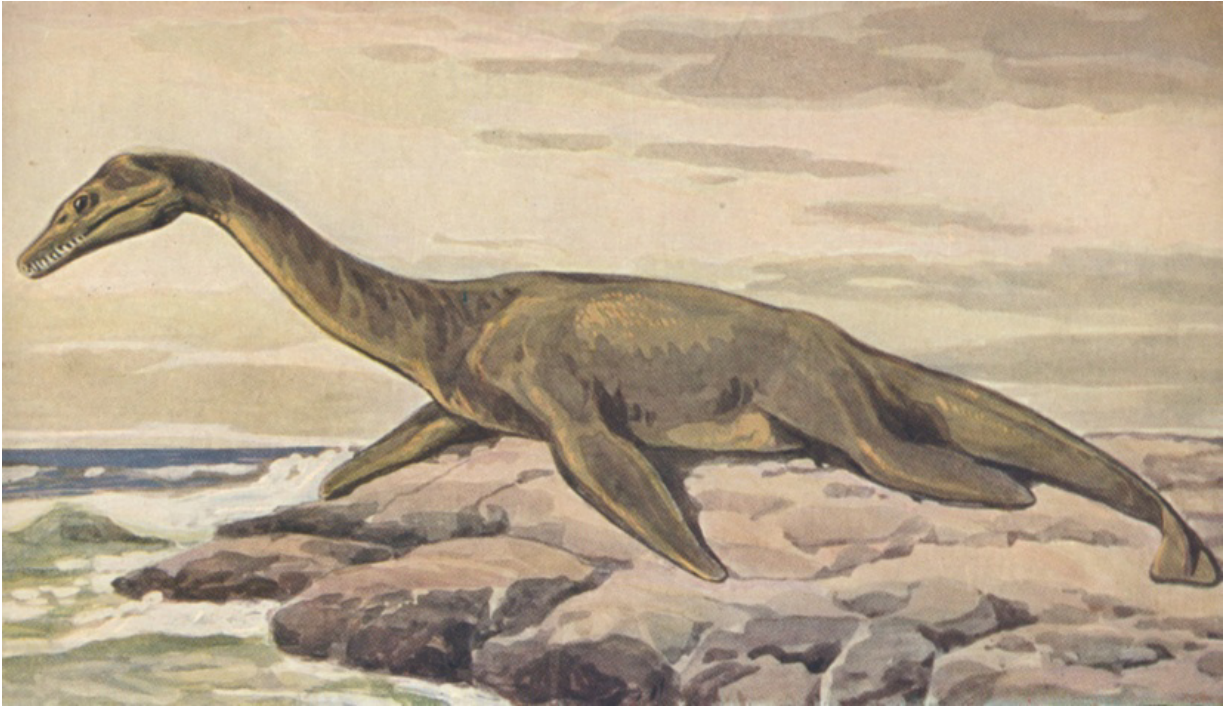
“Mr. Corey set up his camera to make a third flashlight picture, after which we intended to return to the outer cavern. He had scarcely fired the flash, when there was a tremendous splashing in the water ahead, followed by a roaring howl something like that of an enraged bull. In that confined space it was deafening. From the water there arose an animal which, by the light of the lamp in our hands, seemed to be of immense size. It was larger than able and had a long neck and the head of a horse without ears. It charged toward us. The jaws were armed long teeth.

“I fired one barrel of my gun into the creature’s face and as it hesitated I gave it the contents of the other barrel. The animal continued its bellowing, but thrashed around and headed for the opening in the wall. It had a sort of flipper on each side like those of the seal or the wings of a bat.

“While we were having our experience with the strange animals our wives had heard the shots and roars of the injured animal. One of them was prevented with difficulty from plunging into the water while the other fainted.

“Whether the animal seen by us was one of the prehistoric monsters, some of which, it is asserted, were seen in the far north last summer, is a puzzle to me.”

First off, Mr. Eshom’s mention of the “prehistoric monsters” seen in the “far north last summer” clearly acknowledges that he was aware of sea monster stories. As it is, sea monsters are by far the most common variety of cryptid in the world, second only to Bigfoot. As such, you could argue that if you were to make up such a story then why not go with the usual sea monster description? After all, it’s much more believable to claim that one saw a sea monster similar to other reports than to make up a fantastic beast from scratch. Therefore, we must now ask, was it a real sighting or just another “Snaik Story?”



Plesiosaur depiction.

For starters, the description given is very much in line with plesiosaurs and sea serpents. Even mention of the horse-like head is common in sea serpent sightings where witnesses very often compare the heads of the monsters they see to horses. The description of the flippers is also in line with a plesiosaur. Furthermore, the bones of Elasmosaurs have been found in Arkansas before. The problem with the story isn't really what they saw, but the fantastic adventure story that accompanied the sighting (rafting down an underground river, etc.).

As we usually ask, were the people from this article real? To my absolute shock, at least one of them was (I could find no record of the others). Take this excerpt from *American Poland-China Record, Volume 53* (emphasis mine):

FAVORITE 341704.

Farrowed August 31. 1907. In litter 6, raised—boars 2, sows 4, Notch In right ear.

Bred by Albert Eshom, Mendon, Ill., sold to Jas.

Mitchell. Doralne. 111. April 4, 1908. [\[62\]](#)

That wasn't the only mention of Eshom that I found either. I found a second mention of the man in a 1910 edition of the same book. The fact that the town and the name match up is encouraging, even the year matches up as this excerpt details a transaction from 1908! Furthermore, there was also a Mammoth Spring Cattle Sales Barn. Perhaps that was the reason for Eshom's trip?

Getting onto the Quincy Public Library site I was able to access old newspaper records and found that Eshom was a very respectable member of the community serving on numerous committees. His name also showed up often as a juror. All the articles I read about him had only good things to say, though I never found mention of his trip to Mammoth Springs.

As to the Mammoth Springs today, it became a state park in 1957, and at some point the cave granting access to the underground river collapsed.

Sources:

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THE VAN METER MONSTERS

TERROR OF THE BIOLUMINESCENT PTERODACTYLS!

THE VAN METER MONSTER incident of 1903 is one of the stranger strange encounters included in this book. Some people tend to group these sightings into the “strange visitor” categories reserved for cryptids like Mothman rather than the remnant dinosaur family.^[63] But, the observed creatures, whatever they were, have enough similarities to pterodactyls that they are worth including here.

The storytelling of the encounter has an almost cinematic quality to it, three-act structure and all. The first-night mysterious noises awaken various citizens out of their beds in Van Meter, Iowa. They spy strange lights emanating from a frightening form, but can’t get a clear view of what they are actually looking at. The next night the creature returns and this time residents get a closer look at it. They describe a monster with bat-like wings that shot a bright light out of its horned head. The third night the town is ready for the creature, and actually watches it emerge from a mineshaft with a second member of its species. The creatures fly off into the night and return at dawn. The townsmen shoot at the monsters, which slink back into the mines unfazed, never to be seen again...^[64]



Van Meter, Iowa. Van Meter Public Library.

With that prelude out of the way, here is the entire tale:

Town of Van Meter Wrought Up Over a Fishy Story

Hideous Monster Alleged to Have Terrified All Posse of Citizens Shoot

Van Meter- Oct 3 (Special) - Quite frequently one hears of a haunted house, but for a whole town to have 'em' is a different proposition. Van Meter, a town of about 900 souls, lying 20 miles west of Des Moines, alone enjoys the distinction of being haunted. Queer noises are heard, hideous apparitions are seen and uncanny lights move around in a mysterious manner.

U.G. Griffith an implement dealer, drove into town Monday night at 1 a.m. and saw a light on top of Mather & Gregg's building. Thinking it might be burglars, he cautiously approached, but before he was very near the building the light moved across the street to another building and disappeared.

But little attention was paid to the story next morning, but the following night at about the same hour Dr. Alcott, who sleeps in the

rear of his office, was awakened by a bright light shining in his face. He is a plucky little fellow, and grabbed his gun of immense proportions and ran outside the building, where he was confronted with something or other that seemed half human and half animal and yet had great bat-like wings, and the light seemed to come from a single blunt horn that grew out of its forehead.

Doctor Fires at the Monster

The doctor fired five shots at it at extremely close range, but either missed it or the bullets took no effect. The remaining load he kept for protection, and he ran into the house, barring doors and windows, where he remained until morning.

Peter Dunn, cashier of the local bank, fearing a robber, tore himself from the bosom of his family, and with a trusty shotgun loaded with buckshot, stood guard over the bank's funds, and as the town clock struck one he heard a noise on the east side of the building as of someone strangling, then in another instant the mysterious light shone full upon him through the front window so brightly that he was almost blind. The light would move around the room, and he could see a great form of some kind. Then as the light swung back to him once more he could stand the suspense no longer, and fired point-blank at the monster, tearing out the glass and part of the sash, and it disappeared as quickly as it appeared. "Pete" naturally thought he had killed it, but when day dawned there was not a trace of anything but a broken front, and he sadly thought of the time he shot at a stuffed pelican. But this was not a stuffed pelican, for great three-toed tracks were to be found in the rear of the building, one of which "Pete" has a plaster cast.

O.V. White Encounters It

The next night O.V. White, who has rooms over the hardware building was awakened by a sound that resembled two rasps being rubbed together. He quickly opened a window and, with gun in hand, peered out into the darkness and rain. For some time he could see nothing, then as his eyes became accustomed to the darkness, he could see what he supposed was the monster sitting on the cross arm of a telephone pole, and was not fifteen feet away. It was not giving out the light which had previously characterized it.

Ordinarily Mr. White is a good shot, and he says he took deliberate aim and fired, but instead of killing it the shot only seemed to waken it up, and instantly its light was turned on him, and it emitted an odor that seemed to stupefy him, and he remembered no more about it. The shot fired by Mr. White awoke Sidney Gregg, who was sleeping in his store just across the corner. Rushing to the front door he saw the monster descending the telephone pole after the manner of a parrot, using its huge beak. When it reached the ground it stood erect and flapped its great featherless wings, standing at least eight feet high and giving off a light from its forehead as bright and searching as an electric headlight.

Moved About Like a Kangaroo

Mr. Gregg says it moved about like a kangaroo, with great leaps, sometimes using its wings to assist it. When the fast mail came tearing through town it crouched as if to spring, but ran on all four feet with wings extended, and sailed away. Then Gregg remembered he had a gun, but it was too late to shoot, and he watched it sail away toward the old coal mine and disappear. But last night the climax was reached. Several persons were watching for its appearance. Among the rest was Professor Martin of the South Side High School, who from description gave of it had pronounced it to be some sort of an antediluvian monster. But the show did not open until 1 a.m.

J.L. Platt Jr., was at the brick plant in the northwest part of town, where are employed a considerable number of men day and night, and at a few minutes before he heard a noise down in the old abandoned coal mine about forty rods away, and as the men had been hearing noises for some time he went up to the opening of the mine.

Is Located in a Coal Mine

Presently the noise opened up again, as though Satan and a regiment of imps were coming forth for battle. But in a moment the monster appeared, accompanied by another somewhat smaller, but each gave off that brilliant light from the horn-like protuberance as they sailed away. A crowd of men and guns were gathered together to rid the earth of them when they should return, as it seemed evident they had been occupying the old mine for some time. The electric lights were turned

on all over town to frighten them off, but they had evidently gone elsewhere, for they did not return until the first streak of dawn.

Many Shots of No Avail

The reception they received would have sunk the Spanish fleet, but aside from unearthly noises and that peculiar odor they did not seem to mind it, but slowly descended the shaft of the old mine. Today the town is all excitement, and a force of men has been set to work to barricade the mouth of the mine. Several methods of exterminating them have been suggested, but nothing seems to meet the approval of those in charge.

Here is an article from the following day. It is mostly the previous article retold, but you can look to my footnotes for notable differences, emboldened by me within the text.

Des Moines Daily News, October 4, 1903

This Monster like a Maniac's Dream Awful Winged Form Shedding Dazzling Light Terrifies an Iowa Town

Des Moines, IA., Oct 4 - The town of Van Meter, containing 1,000 persons is terribly wrought up by what is described as a horrible monster. Every man, woman, and child in the town is in a state of terror, and fully half of them fail to close their eyes in slumber except in broad daylight. Friday night while the population was keeping the dreadful vigil every electric light in the city was kept burning to satisfy the most timid. The monster put in its appearance Monday night, U.G. Griffith, an implement dealer, drove into town at 1 A.M. and saw what seemed to be an electric searchlight on **Maher & Grigg's**^[65] store. While he gazed it sailed across to another building and then disappeared.

His story was not believed the next day. But the following night **Dr. A.C. Olcott**,^[66] who sleeps in his office on the principal street, was awakened by a bright light shining in his face. He grabbed a shotgun and ran outside the building where he saw a monster, seemingly half

human and half beast, with great bat-like wings. A dazzling light that fairly blinded him came from a blunt, horn-like protuberance in the middle of the animal's forehead, **and it gave off a stupefying odor that almost overcame him.**^[67]

The doctor discharged his weapon and fled into his office, barring doors and windows, and remained there in abject terror until morning. Peter Dunn, cashier of the only bank in the town, fearing bank robbers, loaded a repeating shotgun with shells filled with buckshot and prepared to guard his funds next night. At 2 o'clock he was blinded by the presence of a light of great intensity.

Eventually he recovered his senses sufficiently to distinguish the monster and fired through the window. The plate glass and sash were torn out and the monster disappeared. Next morning imprints of great three-toed feet were distinguishable in the soft earth. Plaster casts of them were taken. That night Dr. O.V. White saw the monster climbing down a telephone pole, using a beak much in the manner of a parrot. As it struck the ground it seemed to travel in leaps, like a kangaroo, using its huge featherless wings to assist. It gave off no light. He fired at it, and he believes he wounded it. The shot was followed by an overpowering odor.^[68] Sidney Gregg, attracted by the shot, saw the monster flying away.

But the climax came Friday night. The whole town was aroused by this time. Prof. Martin, **principal of the schools,**^[69] decided that upon the description it was an antediluvian animal. Shortly after midnight J.L. Platt, foreman of the brick plant, heard a peculiar sound in an abandoned coal mine, and as the men had reported a similar sound before a body of volunteers started an investigation. Presently the monster emerged from the shaft, accompanied by a smaller one. A score of shots were fired without effect. The whole town was aroused and a vigil was maintained the rest of the night, but without result, until just at dawn, when the two monsters returned and disappeared down the shaft. Watch was kept again last night, but without result. The town geniuses are devising various plans to capture the monsters.

Just what these plans were, and if they came to fruition, is unfortunately unknown. The follow-up articles on the incident, like the one below, claimed the whole affair was an exaggerated joke.

**Van Meter Mystery Not Solved But the report by Phillips was
Much Exaggerated.
Is it a Robber or a Joker?**

Van Meter, Oct. - (Special) The “mystery” that has served to considerably excite the residents is still unsolved. The account sent to newspapers by H.H. Phillips was, however, considerably exaggerated.

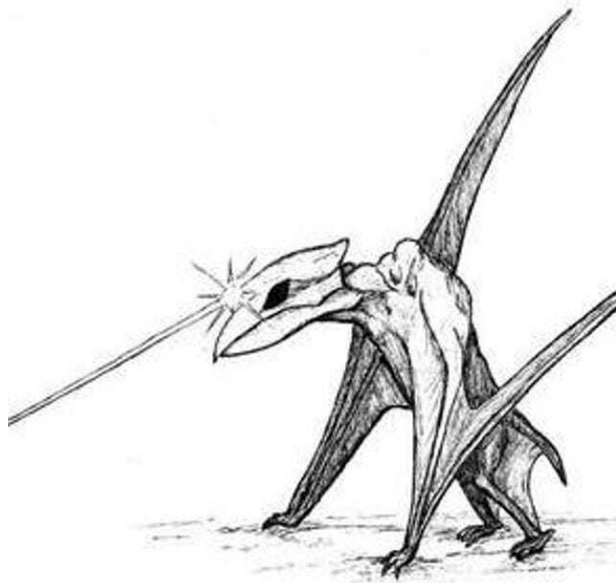
The fact is that instead of there being some prehistoric or antediluvian monster living in this vicinity, there is either some very active practical joker or some energetic robber at large.

It is true that divers^[70] persons have been disturbed by various sounds and lights and that one bank official fired through the front of the building in a vain effort to hit some object that had awakened him by throwing a bright light through the window. Mr. Phillips has exercised his imagination to “build up” a stronger story for newspaper publication by weaving fictitious details with the genuine.

However, just because the above article says the whole fiasco was a joke doesn’t necessarily mean so. It could just be one reporter taking a dig at another.

Now let’s examine just why a pterodactyl-type animal is a good candidate for the creature, strange glow and all. Firstly, the articles mention a professor (presumably a well-educated man) within the town mentioning how he believed it was an antediluvian monster.^[71] That the monsters were spotted in a pair, presumably a mated male and female, or a parent and its offspring, also lends some credence to the story. Usually, monsters were just “one-offs” in old newspaper articles, and it was fairly rare for a pair to be spotted.

The odor emitted from the monster is one of the oddest details of all, and actually lines up with the Elizabeth Lake pterodactyl sightings (covered later in this book). What’s even stranger, in this case, is that the odor knocked one man unconscious and he remembered nothing after that point—almost like missing time in a UFO case.



Van Meter Monster. Van Meter Public Library.

The fact that the wings were featherless keeps in common with a pterodactyl, as does the horn on the head (presumably the beak?). The fact that the creature emits lights actually doesn't knock it out of the realm of credibility—well, credibility as far as remnant pterosaur sightings go. There are more than a few cases where the creatures are seen to be bioluminescent. A college biology professor, Peter Beach, claimed to see bioluminescent pterosaurs over a river in Washington State. A woman on a cruise ship in the Caribbean also saw what she described as glowing pterosaurs flying over the water. Pterosaur researcher Jonathan David Whitcomb has even found reports of glowing ropens, a variety of African pterosaurs, from Umboi Island where the witness described the creature as glowing red, like the embers of a fire.

And, if said creatures had an underground nest then it would make sense that they have bioluminescent abilities. Speaking of pterodactyls living in mines, there are other stories to corroborate this. In 1856 the *Illustrated London News* ran an article about French miners discovering a pterodactyl in an underground tunnel. However, that article is very much believed to be

a hoax, which is unfortunately what many people think of the Van Meter Monster.

Today the Van Meter Monster incident is fairly well remembered, and a lengthy book on the incident was written for those who would like to research it more: *The Van Meter Visitor: A True and Mysterious Encounter with the Unknown* by Chad Lewis.

Lewis did serious research on the case, even camping outside the famous mineshaft one night. He also investigated the witnesses and found that they were respectable town citizens. “These weren’t town drunks,” Lewis told the *Des Moines Register* in 2013.^[72] The town librarian, Jolena Walker, also had good things to tell the *Des Moines Register* about the men. “Those guys wouldn’t have wanted that publicity,” she said. Walker also visited the area of the old mine and got an uneasy feeling. So too did the owner of the land, John Jungman.

Like Roswell, NM and its UFO Festival, in 2018 Van Meter held its first-ever Van Meter Visitor Festival. Walker told me, “We have many more citizens who embrace the legend. We do have few who don’t think it was anything, or that nothing happened, but some of them are from families of original settlers. We get the feeling they try to hide it or not discuss it.”

Whether you think of the strange Van Meter Monsters as aliens, dinosaurs, or just plain monsters of the wildest type, the story is undeniably a good one.

Sources:

Kilen, Mike. “Van Meter remembers 1903 visit from winged monster.” *Des Moines Register*. (July 2015) www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2015/07/01/van-meter-remembers-1903-visit-from-winged-monster/29583469/

Lewis, Chad. *The Van Meter Visitor: A True and Mysterious Encounter with the Unknown*. On The Road Publications: 2013.



AN IDAHO DINO

HUNTING A DINOSAUR

WHAT MORE UNLIKELY place than Idaho to run into a giant dinosaur? And yet, according to the *Carbon County News*, two hunters did just that in 1909. Their wild story sounds more akin to a Japanese monster movie than any real cryptid encounter. It begins with the men spying a huge set of horns (which look like antlers in the drawing) coming from out of a gulch. They are attached to a dinosaur of proportions so monstrous, it scarcely could have existed in real life. Here is the unaltered story in full:

IDAHO MEN FIGHT GIANT BEAST

**BULLETPROOF ANIMAL CAUSE OF GREAT TERROR IN
QUIET COUNTRY**

STILL TALK OF THE GIANT

Great Creature Crunches Trees in its Teeth and Lifts Rocks Weighing Tons, say Two "Sober" Citizens

Frozen Dog, Idaho—The people of this quiet neighborhood, as they gather around their fireside still talk of the unclassified monster seen by two men in the hills near Mendota.

It was first seen by Joseph Cliffe and Walt Gifford.^[73] They were on a hunting trip in the North Basin when they came upon the hideous monster. As described by them and others who saw it later, the beast bears no resemblance to any other animal extinct or in existence.

Cliffe and Gifford were following the trail through the dense forest of the basin last Monday and had reached a point near Grizzly Gulch when a tremendous bellow echoed from the depths of the gulch and caused them to halt tremblingly. As they peered toward the point from whence the noise came an immense pair of horns, crowning a lizardlike head of enormous size, appeared above the gully's edge. Deep-set in the creature's slimy head a pair of great round eyes glistened with a terrifying light. The hunters, nearly frightened to death, and not caring to make closer acquaintance with the strange animal, beat a wild retreat to the top of North Mountain.

Arriving there they halted, out of breath, and looked down furtively into the gulch. The creature, with head still darting hither and thither, almost filled the gulch with its colossal bulk. Its body resembling somewhat that of a dinosaur, was sheathed with slimy scales, and all along the back were ranged a row of bony spikes. The forelegs were shaped like those of a horse, though only half the size. The hind legs, 30 feet in length, and as big around as a good-sized pine tree, or like those of an ostrich. A kangaroo-like tail 80 feet long stretched its length down the bed of the gulch. Gaining courage Cliffe raised his 45-90 and aimed at the monster's head, pulled the trigger. His arm was true enough, but the bullet's force was spent before it reached the mark. The bullet's impact with the animal's head was forceful enough however to arouse its ire and cause it to thrash about wildly.

Great rocks weighing tons were dislodged by the angry flourishings of the beast. Trees two feet through were gripped in the snapping maw and made into kindling wood by the things sharp teeth. Cliffe was preparing to take another shot when the animal leaped to the top of the gulch as if shot from a catapult, and bounded much after the fashion of a kangaroo up the trail. A wild race followed in which the beast gained with every leap until the terrified hunters gained the woods bordering Trout Creek. Here the thickness of the timber slackened the pace of the pursuing monster and made possible the escape of Cliffe and Gifford, who reached the town and in exhausted condition. A posse scoured the hill country and once or twice saw the strange beast at a great distance.

The creature sounds unlike any known cryptid or dinosaur in either its description or its gigantic dimensions.^[74] The closest cryptid the creature

comes to matching is the Gowrow of Arkansas and one other from Native American legend. The creature, simply called “Burrowing Monster” or “Horned Monster”, is described by Adrienne Mayor in *Fossil Legends of the First Americans* as “a giant misshapen elk”. Whether this was the artist’s intention or not, the accompanying illustration looks like a giant, monstrous elk. And perhaps the biggest coincidence of all, the “Horned Monster” was associated with gullies—the monster in the Idaho sighting was spotted in a gully! A fun coincidence to say the least, and I find it doubtful the article’s author knew of this Native American monster from the Southwest.

Later, while conducting a totally unrelated search, I happened to finally find a follow-up article denouncing the whole thing as a fake in the *Twin Falls News* from May 7, 1909. Even the locale of “Frozen Dog” was fictitious. While the main headline is discernable, the smaller main body of text, unfortunately, was not. What follows is my best guess as to what it reads:

THUS DOTH THE NATURE FAKIR

DREAM OF IMPOSSIBLE

ANIMALS IN IDAHO

Weird Story of a Mastodon Encountered by Two Hunters in the Vicinity of Frozen Dog, a Spot as Mythical as the Tale Itself.

MENDOTA, Idaho. South of Frozen Dog. April 21. This usually quiet village has for a week past been wildly excited over the adventure in the hills near town of an, as yet, unclassified animal. It was first seen by Joseph Cliffe and Walt Gifford last Monday. They were on a hunting trip in the Northlands when they came upon the monster. As described by them and others, who have said to have seen it, the beast bears no similarities to any other animal in existence.

Unfortunately, the middle portion of the article is almost completely indecipherable but it appears to be mostly a rehash of the original article. I

did do my best to read the final paragraph though, which does have some additional “information” if you could call it that.

A posse has been scouring the whole country and once or twice have seen the strange beast at a great distance. Prof. Victor of the [indecipherable] says that from the description given by the hunters he judges the strange beast to be closely related to the ancient Colisttoharian commonly known as the whistling wampus doodle. The *Saturday* [indecipherable] *Chicago*.

As this story was denounced as a fake right off the bat, and due to the creature’s undeniably strange description, we shan’t give it any more examination.

Sources:

Mayor, Adrienne. *Fossil Legends of the First Americans*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

EAST COAST WEST COAST RIVER WYRMS

FROM THE SAN GABRIEL TO THE ALLEGHENY

THERE IS A THEORY that dragon myths were spawned by remnant dinosaurs. Our next tale, if it be true, has a lot more in common with a traditional dragon (sometimes called orms or wyrms)^[75] than it does a dinosaur. It describes a large, winged serpentine being of some sort gliding across the San Gabriel River which flows through Los Angeles and Orange Counties in California.

The river was an important factor in the growth of Los Angeles in the early 1900s as the city began to look to the San Gabriel River for its water supply. For farmers of the time, it was an invaluable source of water for irrigation. However, in November of 1906, it was the locale of a dragon sighting as reported in the *Carbondale Daily Free Press* on November 23rd on page four.

WATER MONSTER

IT IS SEEN IN THE SAN GABRIEL RIVER,
CALIFORNIA.

Campers Above Azusa Fire Hundreds of Shots at Strange Ophidian, Which Comes from Fissure in Mountains.

Azusa, Cal.—With wings extended so that they rested on the water like a web, covering the surface for a distance of ten feet on either side, a water monster swept down the San Gabriel river near Azusa and while more than a dozen campers pumped shot at the creature from Winchester rifles the great snake slowly disappeared in the water and was finally lost from sight at a sudden turn of the stream.

As a result of the monster's appearance campers and tourists in the vicinity are spending much of their time following the river trails in the hope of catching sight of the dread beast again, but thus far no damage from settlements in the neighborhood have been reported, and aside from the lucky ones who thronged the river bank on the hour of the snake's appearance, and by reports brought in by two prospectors^[76] of the lower hills who saw the monster in the waters of the river, nothing has been heard from it.

The camps in the neighborhood of Azusa have been unusually well populated this season because of the fact that huge fissures have appeared in the Sierra Madres, probably caused by recent earthquakes. These places have been curiously examined by students and by the usual number of campers, and one theory as to the water monster's appearance is that he came from some subterranean passage of the San Gabriel river, and losing his way continued down the stream until he again entered one of the fissures.

At any rate, about three miles above the spot where the monster was first seen the San Gabriel swings within 100 feet of an unusually deep fissure. From the depths of the cut can be heard the rush of subterranean waters, but no light penetrates far enough to show the hidden caverns.

The monster, according to the statements of those who not only saw it but shot at it, was about the size of a pony in the body, with wings about 20 feet wide, from tip to tip. The head resembled the head of a snake, while the color was of a grayish white, common to subterranean creatures. The entire body was covered with slime. The eyes were

white and distended, and apparently the beast could not see, but was guiding himself by a sense of direction. The first camper who saw it gave a yell of surprise, and with others began firing. It is thought that one of the shots took effect in the animal's neck, as the great tail lashed the water in a fury and the body quickly began to disappear underwater. A thousand feet farther downstream the campers again beheld the monster as it waved its head high above the waters, and then the great wings, closed over the back of the water, became submerged and the campers lost sight of it. Ripples on the water showed for some distance downstream until all trace of the monster was lost.

A careful watch is being kept on the river by forest rangers and campers, and if the creature appears again some of the eastern institutes may have a remarkably good specimen of a strange ophidian or saurian.

Harry Morse and Bill Brown, the ferrymen at Austin's crossing, have announced their determination to capture the monster, and they are constructing a net made of a section of wire fence.^[27] The ferrymen say their net is horse-high, hog-tight and bull-strong. They believe it will hold the winged horror.

The efforts of these river men are watched with great interest.



Dragon illustrations by naturalist Ulisse Aldrovandi.

The description of the beast defies any known dinosaur in large part due to the wings (nothing about this description made me think of a pterodactyl either). I would like to ponder, however, if by wings the witnesses really

meant flippers of some sort, like a plesiosaur? However, considering they described the body as being around the size of a horse with ten-foot “wings” those would have to be mighty big flippers.

Also interesting is the underground aspect of the monster, with the writer mentioning a theory that it came from an underground river. He cites the grey color of the skin and the dull, white eyes as evidence of the thing having lived underground for a long time. Dragons, of course, were notorious for having subterranean lairs that they hid within.

Unbelievable though it may be, there was a very similar story to this one reported some months earlier via the *Hagerstown Mail* on August 31, 1906, regarding a sighting in Pennsylvania:

A WINGED SNAKE

Persons living 3 miles below the reservoir are excited over the appearance several days ago of a strange water monster in the form of a serpent with wings. Miss Rachel Talbot, daughter of W.A. Talbot, president of a tonic company, who has a summer villa opposite the overflow, was first to see the creature as it came swimming up the middle of the stream, its head protruding several feet above the surface. She called to Frank Jackson, who ran for his rifle and opened fire.

Immediately the reptile reared its head 10 feet in the air Jackson says and charged for the shore, its eyes as big as beer waiters, fixed on him.

Jackson steadied himself, and taking careful aim, fired the bullet hitting one of the wings and disabling it.

Jackson says the snake finally flew as high as the reservoir bank, 40 feet.

Initially, I thought to myself that we had two possibilities here: either the newspaper reporters of the time were copying one another (basically using the same monster in a different setting), or witnesses were actually seeing the same thing. Unfortunately, as I dug deeper, I discovered it was most likely the former. The final nail in the coffin, for me at least, came when I found a more detailed version of the previous article in the *Fairbanks Evening News* on October 6, 1906 (about a month before the San Gabriel story). It is similar to the aforementioned story to an uncanny extent. As you

read it, you may yourself surmise that the San Gabriel story was likely just an imitation of the story below.

A Sea Serpent in Fresh Water

W.A. Talbot, president of the Piso Company,^[78] a Pennsylvania book publisher located in Warren, had “a summer villa opposite Grunderville.” In October,^[79] the press reported that his daughter saw a sea serpent in the Allegheny River: “Miss Rachel Talbot. . . was first to see the creature as it came swimming up the middle of the [Allegheny] river, its head protruding several feet above the surface. She called to ‘Hank’ Jackson, ferryman for the Warren Lumber Company, who ran for his rifle and opened fire. Immediately the reptile reared his head at least ten feet in the air, Jackson says, and charged for the shore, its eyes as big as saucers, fixed on him and propelling itself like lightning, partly by lashing the water with the tail end of its body and partly by means of two enormous fin-like wings spreading out from either side of its neck, with which it fanned the air furiously.” Jackson fired on the creature, and a bullet pierced one of the wings, disabling the serpent and knocking it down. It then proceeded to move in a circle, the lower part of the body underwater, the head in the air as it flicked a long, forked tongue at him, hissing all the while. On the other side of the river, barge-builders at work secured guns and blasted away. As all of this was going on, the serpent dived underwater and was out of sight for short periods of time.

Finally, the serpent used its wings and tried to fly away. It was 20 feet in the air when Jackson managed to disable its other wing. It emitted a piercing shriek, then hit the water with a great splash and swam rapidly down the river.

The account said: “It is believed by those who saw the monster it is the same one reported as having been seen in Oil creek at Titusville on August 1, and it probably entered the Allegheny at Oil City. Two boys, Jackson Miller and Harold Boynton, saw the serpent while they were camping on the river near Irvington, but the story told by these lads was not believed until the experience of the Grunderville people.”

As you can see, the sequence of events of the San Gabriel story and this one (published within months of each other) are quite similar with men

firing at a large, winged serpent as it glides down the river. It's enough to make me wonder if the same writer wrote both articles, one for the east coast set in Pennsylvania and one for the west coast set in California. Or, if not, perhaps a separate writer on the west coast took inspiration from the east coast story?

On the other hand, if you read the two descriptions, the San Gabriel description is a bit more detailed, describing a grey colored slimy monster. The Allegheny description is vaguer but specifically states that "two enormous fin-like wings [spread] out from either side of its neck". The other description was vague as to where the fins or wings were placed. Nor did the San Gabriel River monster fly! Real or not, we can consider the San Gabriel version the more believable of the two encounters. It should also be noted that newspaper articles on flying serpents were not altogether uncommon, and this tome shall cover a few more such stories in later chapters.

Aside from the similarities in the two articles what really got my attention was the identity of one of the witnesses in the Allegheny sighting. The daughter of W.A. Talbott came from a rather interesting family, and their history may actually offer some illumination as to the strange article... W.A. Talbott of the Piso Company was presumably the son, or some other relative, of Dr. Macajah C. Talbott. Dr. Talbott was notorious for his role inventing one of America's most notorious "quack medicines": Piso's Cure for Consumption—an alcoholic tonic. The tonic was sold successfully for many years but came under fire as "quack medicine" the year before this article was published. In 1905 a critic of the time wrote that:

Analysis shows the "cure" contains chloroform, alcohol, and apparently *cannabis indica*... It is, therefore, another of the remedies which cannot possibly cure consumption, but on the contrary, tend by their poisonous and debilitating drugs to undermine the victims' stamina.^[80]

Considering that Piso's tonics were under fire in the year 1906, could it be that some reporter decided to take aim at the family by making up a monster sighting in the vicinity of one of their factories? As it was the Piso Company had a factory in the middle of the Allegheny River called "The Island".



On the other hand, many of these “Snaik Stories” loved to poke fun at the witnesses for having been drunk or under the influence whenever they saw the “wampus doodle” or whatever odd creature had been sighted. That no mention is made of Piso’ tonics in this piece is very odd, as it would seem too good a chance to pass up that a member of such a notorious family saw a flying snake. Furthermore, the October 6th article doesn’t even mention that aspect of Talbott’s business and identifies it as a book publisher!

Unfortunately, it’s my belief that the Pennsylvania articles were a hoax which was then copied by a writer in California who decided to do his own spin on the story but set on the San Gabriel River. Or, maybe in the year 1906, a giant winged serpent, or serpents, were floating around various rivers on both sides of the U.S?

Sources:

Sullivan, Jack. “Piso’s Trio: One Step Ahead of the Law.” *Bottles and Extras*. September-October 2007.

“Snaik Stories”

SUPER SNAKE VS. SOUTHERN PACIFIC

Kudos to whoever wrote this article! In researching this book, I never could have dreamed to come upon something quite this wild. And by wild I mean a giant flying snake attacking a train! I’m not even going to try to look for any truth in this one, but enjoy the tale retrieved from the *Delphi Journal* of March 15, 1882:

A Flying Snake

Los Angeles Times.

One of the most startling stories that has been told in these parts for some time was related by the engineer and fireman who came in last night on the Southern Pacific express, and was corroborated by the passengers. It seems that just after the train had passed Dos Palms, the engineer noticed, about half a mile ahead, what looked like a column of sand moving very slowly from east to west. At that time it was only a short distance from the track, and moving at such a pace that it was evident that train and column would come together. When the two monsters were but a short distance apart it was discovered that the column was not sand, but an animal of some kind. It was moving in almost a perpendicular position, the tail dragging on the ground, and propelled by two large wings near the head. The bird, snake, or whatever it was, seemed to be about thirty feet long and twelve inches in diameter. By this time everybody, almost, on the train, had put their heads out of the windows, and were hanging on the platform to get a look at the monster snake. The train and snake came together, but the snake's tail was not where it should have been, and a portion of his lower extremities was clipped off. This seemed to put this flying snake on his mettle, and he prepared for war. He wheeled around and gave chase to the train. The motion of the animal seemed to change in an instant, and he seemed to fly through the air two miles faster than chain lightning. In a few moments he, she or it, overtook the train, and began war after the latest snake style. The angry animal kept over the train and gave the train a lively thrashing, roaring like a cow in distress all the time. After breaking several windows and frightening the women and children almost to death, the monster sailed off, followed by a shower of leads from the pistols of the passengers, which seemed to have no effect at all, if any of the bullets hit him. This is vouched for by everyone who was on the train, and is given for what it is worth.

THE MONSTER OF SNAKE RIVER

A PROSPECTOR'S TALL TALE

I CONSIDERED NOT including this story at all because of its general outlandishness. Plus, the beast is more of a 'what's it' rather than any type of possible dinosaur. But, since the tale comes from an old prospector named "Snake River Pete" it was a bit hard to pass up. Plus, the article writer claims that maybe the story was based upon some truth which Peter greatly exaggerated. But then again, if you really got chased through the desert by a huge lake monster, would you really need to exaggerate? If you have no interest in tales that are likely untrue, you may skip this chapter. But, if you'd like to hear a good yarn from an "old-timer" like "Snake River Pete", enjoy the following from the August 22, 1912 edition of the *Twin Falls News*.

STRANGE ANIMAL IN SNAKE RIVER

Weird Tales of Extraordinary Monster Brought in by Old Settler

A NUMBER of stories, the truth of which it is impossible to verify, have reached Twin Falls recently of the doings of an unusual and mysterious animal which is said to make its home along the Snake River. The animal is reported to have made its appearance both above and below the falls, and those who claim to know the most about it are divided in their opinion as to whether it is fish or animal or a combination of both. Numerous Sunday picnickers have come across tracks of the thing, and wanted to believe that they have actually seen it. According to these the animal is between 20 and 40 feet long and travels at an incredible rate of speed through the sagebrush in the river bottoms and even climbs the cliffs to the fields above. It also swims rapidly, dives about and plays in the water like a whale, committing a peculiar whistling sound not unlike the exhaustible locomotive.

Some of the stories told have not been taken seriously and it was not until last week that a really authentic account of the strange visitor was obtained. Last Saturday "Snake River" Pete, one of the best-known placer miners along the river, and widely acquainted among the old-timers of the county, came in to make his weekly purchases of grub and supplies, and he was immediately asked for any information he might have as to the stories which are going the rounds. Pete listened attentively and finally admitted that not only had he known of the existence of the animal along the river for some time, but that its actions and habits had for months been a source of never-ending interest to him.

"Snake River Pete" says it scatters boulders like pebbles.

Pete talks freely of the extraordinary amphibian, which he declared to be equally at home on land or in the water. He first saw it one evening about three months ago, just about sundown, while washing out the final pan not far from Pillar Falls, preparatory to closing his day's labors. His attention was at first attracted by the huge ripples cast up on shore by the monster at his play. Looking closer he was able to get a good view of the beast, which as soon as it saw Pete leaped clear of the water with a horrible growl and made off down the canyon, scattering the rocks and boulders out of its path like pebbles in its flight.

According to Pete, the site was vaguely disquieting, as the huge body seems capable of more than mere play, and the strength which it exhibited was enormous. It was fully sixty feet long with a head like a shark, small eyes and a pair of short horns. It had fins which resembled wings, and six short legs. He noticed that as it ran the wings moved rapidly.

He next saw it one morning about a week later as he climbed the path which leads to the top of the cliff. Reaching the top his first glance was confronted with an astounding sight. There within sixty feet of where he stood was the great beast leaping about and displaying the most remarkable agility, catching jackrabbits almost at will and biting off and devouring the heads at an incredible rate of speed.

Dives from top of cliff into River.

Pete decided to go home. The animal came to the edge of the cliff and watched him as he descended, but did not offer to give chase. When nearing his cabin he turned just in time to see the huge monster make a dive from the top of the cliff clear into the river, fully 200 feet below. The noise of the splash echoed up and down the canyon like thunder.

Later in the day Pete admitted to a little group of admirers that he had purposely omitted the best feature of his story. It happened about two months ago. One evening while going back to his cabin he came face-to-face with the thing. There was no time to think and the only thing seemed to be to run. Pete says the animal chased him up and down the cliffs, across the river and over the fields for four hours until he was able to reach his cabin by a wide detour, when it bellowed and thrashed around outside for the rest of the night.

Beast moves so rapidly it's feet become red-hot.

An hour or two later he had recollected several important details. Its feet were not large, but were a peculiar red color, which he later discovered to be due to the fact that they were red-hot from the tremendous speed at which the animal traveled in its efforts to catch up with him. He did not leave the cabin for two days, and says he is not going back without the heaviest rifle that he can buy, as he believes that his life would not be safe for a minute if you should happen on the beast unexpectedly.

"Take my oath, boys," said Pete, "it was the darndest thing I ever seen in my life. I was deaf for a week from the noise of it, and if I didn't run 40 miles an hour for pretty near a week without stop and I'm a liar. One time I got within 4 feet of my heels and I got ready to quit, but just then I had to step on a jackrabbit which I overtook in the path, and if the beast hadn't stopped to grab that rabbit I'd a never washed another pan of gravel. I don't know how big it was, but it took up more space and went faster than a train of cars, and the heat from its feet just naturally scorched the ground and burned off most of the sagebrush in its path.

"Sure I'm going back, and if I don't get caught I'll be in again next week and tell you about it."

Some of the more skeptical are inclined to jeer at the wonderful story of Snake River Pete, but those who know him best, while allowing for

a slight tendency towards exaggeration, say that he is to be relied upon in every particular.

News will publish weekly reports of animal's doings

In view of the widespread interest in the matter *The News* has made special arrangements with Pete for a full account of the doings of the strange monster weekly, and later it may be possible to present a few photographs.

A scientific expedition may be organized to study the beast at close range, in which event a correspondent of *The News* will be of the party.

A KENTUCKY COELUROSAURAVUS

FLYING SNAKE OR ANCIENT REPTILE?

ONE OF THE LESSER KNOWN cryptids, compared to Sasquatch and Lake Monsters, is that of the flying snake. Sightings of such creatures have died out somewhat in the last 100 years, but newspapers from the late 1800s and early 1900s were rife with tales of flying snakes. Take this little blurb from the *Newman Herald* from May 12, 1885: “Two adventurers are traveling through Nevada exhibiting a flying snake. The reptile is 4 feet long and has two wings attached to its body, about 4 inches back of the head.” Was it a dead snake two swindlers attached some wings to? Probably, but quite a few pioneers claimed to see live flying snakes out in the wild.



Egyptian depiction of flying snake.

The book *Kentucky Cryptids* details a similar flying snake sighting from May 20, 1899, near Tygart Creek. A farmer and his field hand found the

creature lying on the ground. They said it was about three feet long and black in color. The circumference in the center was thought to be ten inches. Author Ron Coffey writes,

It had four pairs of legs, one set near the head and the other close to a pair of wings located in the middle of the body. The wings appeared batlike and folded under the body. Both men expressed the opinion that the creature was very repulsive. When they attempted to get a closer look, it sprang up from the ground and sailed through the air with considerable speed.^[81]

Though it doesn't match the description precisely, the closest known real prehistoric reptile that could match this description is the Coelurosauravus. It looks more like a flying lizard than a flying snake, but as we established earlier in this book, back in those days the term snake was used a little more loosely than it is today. For instance, the article "Prehistoric Life" published in the *Chippewa Falls Daily Independent* on July 5, 1891, calls some pterodactyl bones the remains of a "flying snake". The article describes the creature as being "about four feet long, with two legs, and evidence that at one time wings grew at the back. The head is elongated and it evidently had a bill like a bird." This serves as a good example that any flying reptile could be called a "flying snake" back then.

The Coelurosauravus could have certainly been called a flying snake by people of the Pioneer Period. The Coelurosauravus, you could say, looked like an iguana with wings or fins attached along the side of its body between the forelegs and hind legs. It was only about a foot long and is believed to have lived in treetops, gliding from limb to limb.

While most of the flying snake articles do seem to clearly describe just that—snakes with wings—here is another article that seems more in line with a Coelurosauravus from the *Statesville Landmark* out of North Carolina from September 20, 1904:

Mrs. John B. Lippard and children report a strange sight. They say that while over on their farm near there last Friday afternoon they saw 30 or more large snakes sailing through the air. They say the snakes seemed to have fins and would average five feet long and four or five inches wide. They watched the snakes sail around and alight in a piece of thickety pine woods. Most assuredly these people saw something.

Then there was also this small blurb from the *Philadelphia Times* on June 10, 1900:

Adventure of a Flying Snake.

The first authentic snake story of the season comes from Bully Hill, the land of the pumping well and the home of freaks of nature. Willis Martin, a young man who is employed as a pumper, was crossing a lease in that district belonging to C. H. Sheasley, when he saw what appeared to be a gigantic hornet coming toward him with lightning speed and flying about ten feet high. He grabbed a piece of sucker-rod lying on the lease and killed the animal. It measured four feet in length, and was found to be a species of flying snake, now almost extinct in this country. It was an inch and a half through at the thickest part, and the wings were 18 inches from tip to tip. It will be stuffed and placed on exhibition.- Franklin News

So, while not all “flying snake” sightings of the Pioneer Period can be attributed to the Coelurosauravus, in the case of the three related articles, they are certainly a contender.

Before we depart onto the next chapter, there was one other possible Coelurosauravus witness from the Old West. The man was none other than Chief Medicine Crow, who sketched a rather interesting “winged snake” in 1880. However, rather than typical bird-like wings, these wings better resembled the dorsal crest of a Spinosaurus. This would very much fit the description of the wings on either side of a Coelurosauravus...

Sources:

Coffey, Ron. *Kentucky Cryptids: “Monsters” of the Bluegrass State*. Fairy Ring Press, 2018.

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DESERT SAND SERPENT

SNAKE STORY OF THE CENTURY

IN THE 19TH CENTURY sea serpents were big news. Every other week it would seem a newspaper would run an article on the phenomena. On July 13, 1876, the *Boulder Colorado Banner* reported on what could be called a sand serpent, as it matched the description of a sea serpent but was sighted on land in the middle of the desert!

A Monster of the Desert

Specimens of the Saurian Species in Colorado –A Most Wonderful Snake Story

Las Animas, June 9.—With an issue of the *News* of a week or since before me, in which the usual ridicule is made of the marine monster known as the sea-serpent, in connection with a Brobdingnagian specimen of the species said to have been seen comparatively recently in the Indian Ocean, I have but to marvel at the incredulity of my race. You are not willing to acknowledge the possibility of the vast caverns of the deep containing denizens which, after all, are not constructed on much larger plan than the familiar whale, while the very plains that surround your city are the home of monsters of by-gone ages. Within a short hundred leagues of Denver may now be found a reptile, compared to which the famous African serpent that once kept Rome's legions at bay could not hold a candle. With my own eyes, only 48 hours ago, did I behold this terrible creature, the like of which I could not have conceived to exist in the heavens above, nor in the earth beneath, nor in the waters under the earth.

Last evening, just at dark, I was traveling horseback-wise along a stretch of country, about 200 miles east of here, which, for a long distance, merits the appellation the old geographies gave this entire region, of the Great American Desert. As far as the eye could reach, not

a living thing, or object created by the hand of man, could be seen. The solitude was as entire as if cattle on a thousand hills were not grazing within less than fifty miles, and the iron horse did not draw his heavy freight only just beyond the line of vision. On every side the horizon only bounded the view, and not even where the sky kissed the plain, did aught but the scanty prairie grass, already burned to brown under the rays of the fast summering sun, lift itself, dotted here and there, by innumerable cacti, from mother earth. And the silence. Save the quickly recovering thud of my horse's hoofs as he loped over the prairie, not a sound was to be heard, and the stillness was so profound that I almost expected to hear the hissing of the sun, which was on the point of setting, as it quenched its fire, according to ancient science, in the Pacific Ocean.

But the silence and solitude were not for long. As I was about to seek a place to build a fire and bivouac for the night, suddenly a long trailing form started from the earth in the very path of the setting sun, and a queer rumbling cry was borne to my ears upon the western wind. I at first thought it was the initial train of some opposition to the Banana Line Railway, and tried to distort the noise I had heard into the whistle of a locomotive, but my horse taught me better. Hardly had the sound died upon the air when an intense trembling seized his every limb, and, with expanded nostrils and dilated eye, he began looking on all sides as if to find a way of escape. And now the same strange cry was repeated, and my terrified sight perceived that what I had taken to be a railway train was an enormous reptile, half serpent, half quadruped, that was now running, now creeping along the earth, with incredible rapidity. Although my limbs almost refused to perform their office for terror, I had turned mechanically to leap on my horse; notwithstanding that I knew that the pace the monster was coming was far faster than that of a horse at full gallop, but the beast had broken away from where I had tied him, and was quickly devouring the earth with rapid feet. Not, however, away from the coming danger! Although destruction stared me in the face, I almost lost consciousness of my peril in viewing the strange scene that followed. As soon as the terrible thing perceived that the horse was able to run at a rate that compelled an inconvenient degree of speed to catch up with him, he suddenly stopped in his career and for a moment remained silent and motionless, and the only sound

to be heard was that made by the retreating horse, which was growing fainter and fainter. Immediately, here it had become quite lost to the ear, the cause of the brute's flight began to utter a sonorous roaring that one moment sounded like some brutish mother calling her young, and another a weird imitation of the cooing of a dove. Hardly had the sound been uttered, when the horse, which was now almost lost to sight in the rapidly growing darkness, stopped. Presently he turned around and began with hastening steps to return. The noise still continued, and even to my human hearing seemed to have, a pleading inviting note in it. The Brobdingnagian beast, too, had assumed the shape at once of a cat ready to play with her kittens, and of a serpent when trying to charm its prey into its folds.

And now let me describe the monster, more terrible than which never creature lived since those long past periods, when all of nature's animated formations were equally great and grotesque, huge and horrible. Like other saurians, it had the body of a lizard, uplifted on, as near as I could judge, eight feet, but its propelling power, as already noted, seemed to exist chiefly in its tail, which streamed behind the body at least a hundred feet. The trunk of the monster must have been thirty feet long by about half that figure in width, and at least from eight to ten feet through. The feet seemed little more than paddles with which to push this huge body along and apparently had little supporting power, the creature's belly touching the ground except when its rapid motion forced it forward in the air. And the head: It seemed as large as an ordinary omnibus, while it was flattened at the top as if having undergone in youth the experience of the papooses of the Flathead Indians, and, towered high up over the body on a neck greater in diameter than a barrel, and fully ten feet in length, eyes, which like those of the dog in Hans-Christian Anderson's story, were as large as saucers, and appeared larger than mill-wheels, were about a yard and-a-half apart, and gleamed like lanterns on either side of a carriage. Thus far the mouth was only partly open, to omit the sound above noted so that in the comparative darkness I could not see it distinctly, but the opportunity to witness it to more advantage soon came. The color of this extraordinary elephant was a dark purple, such as is sometimes used in churches at Lenten time, mottled with black.

By this time the horse had come within the embrace of the seducer, and, the charming all at once ceased. Another movement, and the terrible mouth, which I now could see was as large as a barn-door, opened, and a forked tongue darted out and pulled my poor beast within. Then came the sound of the teeth crunching and the breaking of bones, mingled with the stifled death cry of as faithful a brute as ever man bestrode. Then all was still, and the frightful creature lay motionless, as if digesting its meal. Presently it stirred, and, giving myself up for lost, I made up my mind to be its next victim, when, turning, it rapidly rolled away in the direction from which it came, without as much as looking at me. More dead than alive with terror, I made the best of my way to this place, where I arrived, horseless as I was and nearly all my provisions gone, this morning.

Of course, this story is a hoax. I've found no record to concretely prove it as such, but obviously it's a hoax. But still, let's take a little time to humor its details. Though the eight paddles, obviously flippers, might seem to knock it out of the dinosaurian realm automatically, Patrick Huyghe and Loren Coleman's *Field Guide to Lake Monsters, Sea Serpents and Other Mystery Denizens of the Deep* tells us of something called the Great Sea Centipede (a reptile, not a bug) that almost matches the description. The sea beast certainly wasn't seen in the Colorado desert, but it was seen several times in Indochina.

In the book, the creature is described as a "unique marine animal" that is "generally quite large, 30 to 60 feet in length, with a relatively thin neck. Its body may be segmented, and it displays lateral projections, plates, or fins that stick out prominently from its sides."^[82] Reports of the animal date back to the 16th Century, but reports didn't become more frequent until the 1890s...after this article was written actually. French sailing ships in Indochina began sighting the creatures, and one sighting in 1899 makes mention of the monster's quick locomotion thanks to its many flippers.

Though initially I wanted to say that the article's writer clearly had an affinity for sea serpents and wanted to concoct his own desert tale using the multi-finned variety, they weren't commonly known in 1876. Of course, the article's writer could have just been using his imagination and coincidentally described a creature actually seen on the other side of the world. And yet, oddly enough, the writer does mention a sea serpent seen in

the Indian Ocean, which is where the Sea Centipede was glimpsed in the 1890s.

To continue humoring the tale, I actually found another article that would seem to describe a baby version of the Colorado creature found in California in 1885!

A Big Snake Story The Wonderfully Strange Reptile Discovered by Voracious Californians

[Concord (Cal.) Sun.]

On Wednesday, learning through Thomas O'Neil of this town, that a party of wood – choppers, while felling a tree the day previous near the old Smith Ashley rancho, Pacheco, and some 3 miles from Concord, had discovered an enormous snake, the dimensions of which arouse our attention, we immediately repaired to the scene of the discovery. There, before us, lay an object, the body of which was snake-like and proportions, measuring fourteen feet seven inches long, three feet around the largest part of the body, and tapering gradually toward the tail. They had resembled that of a crocodile, a row of large, pointed teeth lining its jaws, the upper jaw extending forward from the interior angle of each eye; the skin was light-colored, spotted with black; a coat of hair, in places twelve inches long, extended in a continuous line from head to tail; the body being ornamented with eight pairs of short webbed feet. The entire monstrosity would weigh about 200 pounds. The discovery was made after the tree fell, which was found to be hollow, the reptile crawling from it, which so scared the wood choppers that they fled to town, leaving hats and coats behind. Its general appearance was that of the *amphisbaena*, a genus of saurians that abound in South America, and which live mostly on small insects. But how this particular creature came in this vicinity is for the savants of California to study up. We are sorry the reptile was killed, as it might have adorned the interior of a menagerie. However, we should suggest that the officers of the California Academy of Sciences dispatch one of its experts to determine the species of reptile.—Warren (PA) Ledger, December 25, 1885.

I find it rather funny that this creature too has eight pairs of feet or flippers. The writer compares the creature to the amphisbaenians, or worm lizards. The legless creatures basically resemble earthworms and have absolutely nothing in common with the California creature just described. The writer may have actually confused the monster with the amphisbaena, which was the writer's precise spelling. In that case, he would be referring to a mythical Greek monster. The creature had two heads, the latter being on the beast's tail.

All that aside, does this second newspaper story lend any credence to the first, or do great imaginations merely think alike?



Sea Serpent by A.C. Oudemans.

Sources:

Coleman, Loren and Patrick Huyghe. *The Field Guide to Lake Monsters, Sea Serpents, and Other Mystery Denizens of the Deep*. New York: Tarcher/Penguin, 2003.

RAILROAD MONSTER OF PENNSYLVANIA

THE ARMORED LIZARD

EARLIER IN THIS BOOK was mentioned the theory that remnant dinosaurs gave rise to the legend of dragons. And while some dragon legends and descriptions can indeed sound much like a known species of dinosaur, many more of them look like typical dragons. The saurian spotted near a Pennsylvania railroad in 1892 is one such example of a creature that resembles a traditional dragon more so than a dinosaur. The article was published in the *Oak Park Reporter* on December 9, 1892:

THE MODERN MYSTERY

----- A STRANGE MONSTER THAT WORE GOLD SCALES -----

When Moved This Armament Made Sweet Music – Experience of Three Men in the Pennsylvania Cemetery

Jerrold Thompson, Aaron Jobbing and Charles Engel,^[83] of Nicetown,^[84] have had an experience which they will remember as long as they live, says the Philadelphia Times. They started from their homes in the early morning for the purpose of walking over the falls of Schuylkill, intending to take a train there for Norristown, where they were to join some friends and go chestnutting in the upper part of Montgomery County.

After leaving Germantown Avenue the young men cut across the fields to the Port Richmond branch of the Reading railroad, along which they walked until opposite the old oak cemetery property, when their attention was attracted to a peculiar ringing noise, accompanied by a peculiar hissing. Pausing for a few moments they concluded that

the sounds came from the direction of a clump of trees a short distance north from the railroad.

Jobbings climbed up the embankment in advance several paces towards the trees when his hat was seen to raise above his head, and, throwing up his arms, he cried out, "Christopher Columbus!" then fell backward upon the top of the embankment in a dead faint. Thompson and Engel hurried to his assistance, and after working about 10 minutes succeeded in reviving him. On recovering his first words were: "Did you see it?" and after a short pause he informed his companions of what he had seen, and the three, after each getting a stout stick, began a search for the "what was it."

They again heard the ringing around, and in another minute saw a veritable monster crawl up into a clump of grass that stands several inches above the marshy ground.

The thing they beheld was as long as a fence rail and was about a foot in diameter through the thickest part of its body. Its head had the resemblance of a horse's head, with nostrils more like those of an ox. From between its eyes and extending to the top of the head and for a short distance down its body was a growth of bristle-like hair that stood up like the clipped mane of a mule. Back from where the hair ended was on either side a web-like protuberance nearly a foot in length and much the shape of an elephant ear.

The monster's body was covered with heart-shaped scales, the point of the heart curling or pointing outward. At every moment they gave out a metallic ring which sounded like a small sleigh bell, though more silvery. The color of the monster was a beautiful bronze green, with a row of purple on either side which blended gradually to almost a pure white on its underparts. The tail was like that of a fish.

The men, after viewing it for some time, flung their sticks at it, when it raised up its head like a horse and rearing and moved rapidly away through the tall grasses toward the old Tucker mansion, the men following at a respectable distance for the purpose of seeing where it would go. They followed it to near the house when it cut down the hillside and disappeared in the culvert that passes under the Germantown and Chestnut Hill branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

After searching for half an hour the men walked to the falls where they told what they had seen to several men at the railroad station, one

of whom is well-versed in the history of that section and he accounted for the monster as follows:

25 years ago, when McMakin's dam had not been filled in, there was a large snake that inhabited a hole in the base of the rock that then stood on the upper part of the dam. The snake, though not so large as the one seen by the Nicetown men, is probably the same. It was seen in 1875 by a party of men who were mowing the grass from Old Oak cemetery, one of the mowers having struck it accidentally with the heel of his scythe. Neither he nor his fellow workman waited to investigate, but fled from the field.

John H. Richards, a well-known naturalist, tried to capture the McMakin Dam snake for Prof. Agassiz and Spencer F. Baird, of the Smithsonian Institute. Richard spent much time in trying to entrap the snake, and on one occasion succeeded in smoking it out of the crevice of the rock, when it crawled into a large net, but his anxiety got the better of his judgment. In carrying the net to the top of the rock he was too hasty, for the net broke by catching on a sharp part of the rock, and the snake dropped into the water.

Richards often spoke of the snake and said it had probably escaped from some traveling show. Before his death, in 1881, he saw the rock blasted away, and deep down in the crevice were found dried sections of the molted skin which were preserved among his collection of curiosities.



Selection from Nine Dragons.

For starters, I will say that the ending portion of the article, regarding a large snake, is likely coincidental and has no relation to the monster seen by the three Nicetown men. Again, back in those days, all snake and reptile stories tended to be lumped together.

Now, onto the monster seen by the Nicetown men. What we seem to have is something akin to a Chinese dragon. For starters, like the Chinese dragon, it had very pronounced scales whereas many dinosaurs seem to show them having bumpy—not scaly—skin according to skin fossils. The men also never describe any legs, though they could have been obscured under the grass. As such, we cannot surmise if it was a quadruped or some type of large serpent without legs. Considering the men said that it moved rapidly, it's easy to assume it slithered across the ground. Likewise, the skin color (“bronze green, with a row of purple on either side which blended gradually to almost a pure white on its underparts”) brings to mind a Chinese dragon as well.

As to the horse-like head with the “bristle-like hair that stood up like the clipped mane of a mule”, many sea serpents are described as having manes

such as this. Actually, what the men saw isn't terribly dissimilar to a cryptid called the Cadborosaurus, seen in the northern Pacific off the coast of Canada. A corpse of such a creature was even found inside the belly of a sperm whale in Naden Harbor in 1937.^[85] Even the fish-like tail sported by the Pennsylvania monster is similar to Caddy—the affectionate nickname given to the Cadborosaurus.

Cadborosaurs and Chinese dragons aside, if we were to investigate this creature as though it were some type of dinosaur, we could analyze aspects of the description differently. For instance, could the “bristle-like” hair have actually been feathers, which some dinosaurs are thought to have possessed? Furthermore, could the web-like protuberance in the shape of an elephant ear have been a wattle? In recent years it's been theorized that some dinosaurs had wattles—the fleshy bits of skin that hang from under a bird's beak. And like-wise, if it was a wattle, could the top “mane” have been something in line with a cock's comb? In recent years, cock's combs have been added to some dinosaurs as well.

As always, there is no way to prove whether this story happened. Proponents of the dragons are real theory can say this lends credence to them being real creatures, while skeptics can just as easily say the article's writer based his made-up monster on typical dragons. I'll say one more thing though, if you were to make up a story about a dragon, why not go all the way and have it breathe fire?

THE MONSTER OF ELIZABETH LAKE

A PRELUDE TO THE TOMBSTONE STORY?

IN CHAPTER 1 of this book was mentioned the exciting possibility that a prequel existed to the famous Tombstone Pterodactyl story. This is it, and if you thought the Tombstone story was a real whopper then you'll be even more amazed by the tale of the Elizabeth Lake Monster.

Before it was named Elizabeth Lake—more on that later—it was aptly named Devil's Lake. Famed cryptozoologist Loren Coleman himself writes in the classic book *Mysterious America* that, "Geo-graphical 'devil names' worldwide may indicate...locales high in Fortean energy and strangeness. These places deserve some extra attention, for from the stray sod to the fairy ring, from the haunted glen to the Devil's Den, there lies many a riddle to unfold."^[86]



Like so many places, Devil's Lake got its name during the Spanish exploration of North America. Specifically, it occurred in 1780 and was named La Laguna de Diablo by the explorer/priest Junipero Serra. Area residents whispered that within the lake lived a pet of the devil's says one account. A more detailed version of the story had a Conquistador making a

deal with the devil to pave a way for him across the harsh land. The conquistador then double-crosses the devil and his demons, who are consumed in a lake of fire. The lake of fire then turned into water according to the legend.

In 1834, the lake was renamed La Laguna de Liebre, or Rabbit Lake. And then it became known as La Laguna de Chico Lopez, for Francisco “Chico” Lopez, who grazed cattle near its shores. It got its final name from a simple accident in 1849. A girl named Elizabeth Wingfield was camping with her family near the lake. As she walked across a log to fill buckets for cooking and drinking, she slipped and fell in. She wasn’t harmed, and in jest everyone began to call it Elizabeth’s Lake. If only she knew the horror that would spew from her namesake one day...

A Holy Terror.

The Fiery Dragon of Elizabeth Lake.

A Modest Story From Ventura.

The Hideous “Thing” with Dinner-Plate Scales, Headlight Eyes and a Harpoon Tail Now Paralyzing the Natives.

Los Angeles Times | Sunday, August 1, 1886.

The Ventura Free Press, a fortnight ago, had an able sensation. A terrific monster — beside which all the chimeras, gorgons, minotaurs and other bugaboos of antiquity were harmless insects — had been found to inhabit the depths of Elizabeth Lake. It was a good story, but of course the Free Press couldn’t swallow it; but now comes evidence which knocks out the skeptics in the first round.

Let the Free Press tell it:

Last Saturday evening the Free Press published a strange story told by a prospector from the vicinity of Elizabeth lake, and, of course, this paper gave no credence to the tale. We rather made a game of it, in fact, thinking the narrator had been a little the worse for bug-juice, perhaps, and so had let his too freely stimulated imagination run riot. Now there comes to us in confirmation of the prospector’s yarn, a tale so weird and strange, and, withal, so well vouched, that we must accord it a degree of credence seemingly impossible.

The old stage road from Los Angeles to Bakersfield runs through the San Francisquito cañon and up by Elizabeth Lake, and to this day

emigrants, coming from Nevada and San Joaquin country to the coast in wagons, follow this beaten track to the Mojave desert.

A newly arrived emigrant, a very respectable looking man indeed, given the name of Peter B. Simpson, is authority for a story rivaling the fables of the Niebelungen Lied. He says that these strange things are facts. We give the statement for what it is worth:

He had removed his family — a wife and three interesting children — from the Esmeralda mining country in Nevada and, having an excellent wagon and a good team among his personal effects, besides some dozen head of cattle, concluded, time being no object, to come overland to Santa Barbara county. Of course he came by Bakersfield and Elizabeth lake. On the evening of the 15th day of July — the moon being then near it's full — the little party encamped at the upper end of the lake, about a half a mile west of the village. Mr. Simpson says that he noticed the peculiarly penetrating odor arising from the water.^[87] It seemed to float above the lake, and to fill the little valley with vague, undefinable forms of mist. His cattle were allowed to graze at large upon the grass-covered plain. About midnight, when all were soundly sleeping beneath the covered wagon, Mr. Simpson says he was awakened by a terrible commotion which seemed to come from out in the lake. There was an awful roaring, he said, like the muttering of distant thunder, accompanied by a peculiarly loud, indescribable hissing noise. Of course Mr. Simpson arose at once and seized his Winchester, but he could see nothing. Far out in the lake was what seemed to be a black cloud, and below it the water was seething and boiling.

Seeing nothing to alarm him, Mr. Simpson again sought his blankets, but no sooner had he settled to sleep than there was a great rushing through the air as of mighty wings, and the wagon was lifted bodily from the ground, carried about twenty yards out into the plain and dropped, making the wheels a total wreck. There was an immediate stampede of stock, and the terrified family arose at once from their recumbent positions, but they only saw their stock scattering over the plain and a dark form whizzing through the air in the distance. The noise of rushing wings continued, growing fainter. Then all was still.

For a moment Mr. Simpson thought that he had encamped in the path of a cyclone. Thoroughly bewildered, with a rifle in his hand, he stood

listening intently to the great silence which hung upon the desert, when from out that stillness there arose afar off the sound of a great conflict. Peter R. Simpson is a brave man, for across the desert he followed that sound. It seemed as though fifty battering rams were rattling together against the mailed sides of some moated fortress.

Arriving at the summit of a low knoll, Mr. Simpson passed and gazed down into the little valley below him — and all over the scene there fell a flood of warm southern moonlight.

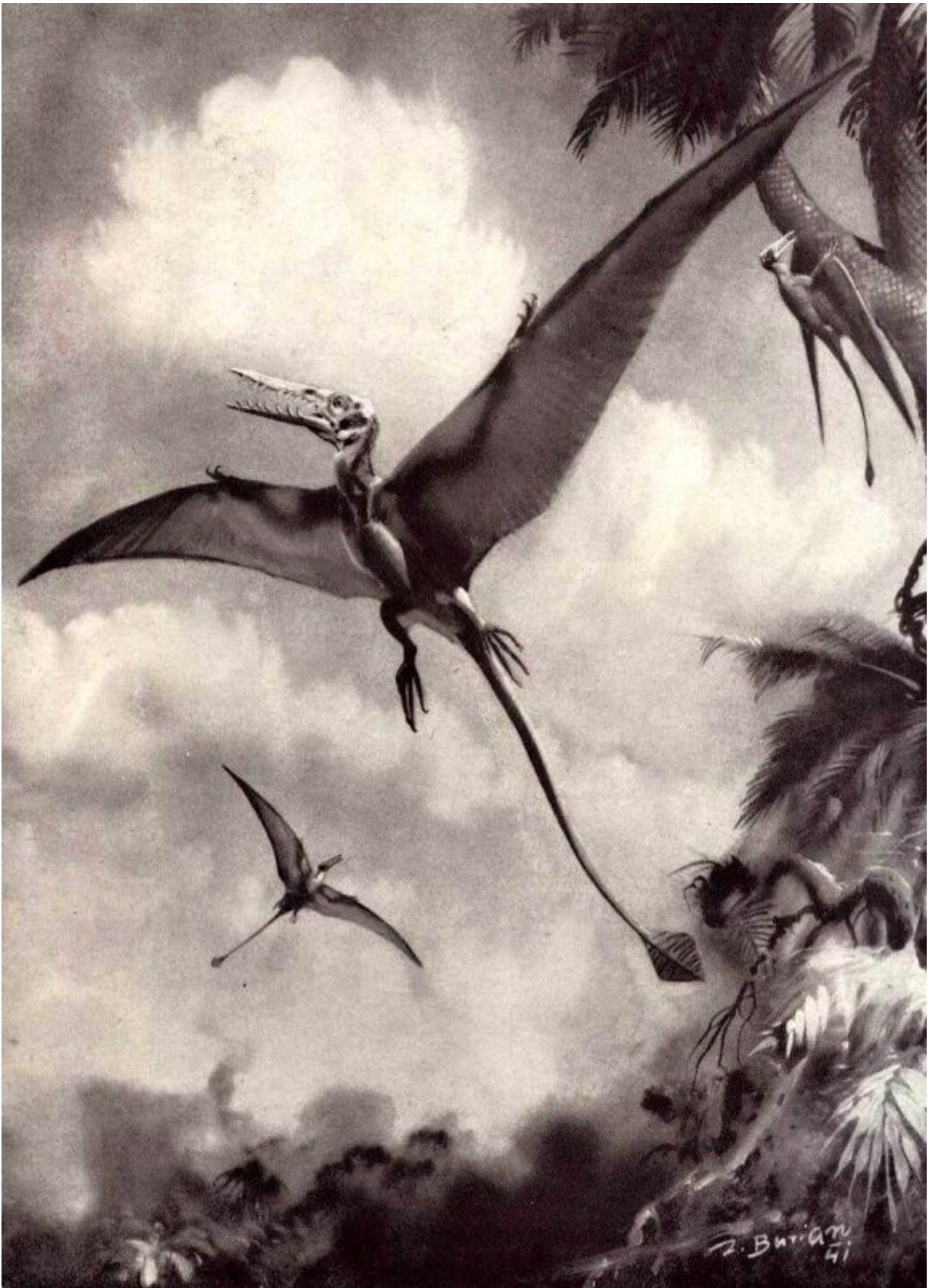
The monster had come upon a drove of antelope sleeping in the gulch, and had at once attacked them. About ten feet from where Mr. Simpson stood a fine buck lay bleeding, bitten clean through at one stroke of the “thing’s” horrid jaws. Around another buck the monster’s wings seemed folded, while its long tail, barbed at the end, played around the pair incessantly, evidently seeking to transfix the antelope. Two other antelope were vigorously trying the effect of their short horns upon the scaly sides of the monster. Mr. Simpson’s description of this “thing” is very succinct: “It was about thirty feet long over all, I should judge,” he said, “and of a warm reddish color, with a long snout and jagged yellow teeth. It had enormous wings, rigged like those of a bat evidently, long hind legs and a long tail, with a seemingly hard, barbed point. From its head and neck fell a shaggy mane, and its huge eyes gleamed like two horrid fires.”

For ten minutes Mr. Simpson stood as one fascinated by this strange conflict, and then, being a keen sportsman, he lifted his gun and took a shot at the monster. He heard the bullet strike, and rebound. Then, disturbed by the shot, the two antelopes took to flight, the beast in the grasp of the monster was transfixed a moment later, and the “thing” arose into the air, carrying its prey in its mouth, and made for the lake where it sank with a splash that must have been audible for miles.

There was no further disturbance that night. In the morning Mr. Simpson returned to the scene of the strange conflict and secured the carcass of the dead antelope. He also picked up some scales which his bullet or the horns of the antelope might have knocked from the sides of the monster. These scales are round, semi-transparent, about the size of dinner plates, and of a reddish glazed appearance, somewhat similar to ground glass. Mr. Simpson still has them in his possession.

Returning to camp, he collected his stock, dispatched one of his boys to the lake village, procured another wagon, and continued on his journey to Carpenteria, where he intends to reside permanently.

At the village he heard for the first time of the appearance to others beside himself of the Elizabeth lake monster.



Now if that were the only mention of the Elizabeth Lake monster then we might be able to easily write it off. But, thanks to Horace Bell^[88] and his book *On the Old West Coast*, that isn't so easy.

As it turns out, it was Bell who translated the legend of the lake regarding the conquistador's deal with the devil. In doing so Bell conversed heavily with an area man, Don Guillermo. To his astonishment, Guillermo went on to tell Bell that to this day the lake was a "horrible, haunted body of water" and a "mouth of Hell."^[89] He said that "Screams, shrieks, groans as though hell itself and its congregation of the damned might lie directly beneath the lake."^[90]

Don Guillermo went on to tell him how white settlers were quickly run off from the lake by a dark force of some kind. Guillermo then told him the tale of Don Pedro Carillo, part of a prominent Spanish lineage in California, who acquired property on the lake in the mid-1830s. Before telling the tale, Guillermo made sure to stress that Carillo wasn't a superstitious man and turned up his nose to such notions. He had built a house by the lake which he lived in for three months. Then one night the home mysteriously caught fire and Carillo and his family ran away into the night. The non-superstitious Carillo then claimed he believed it was devilish forces at work near the lake and that he was "permanently old" from the experience.

In the 1850s white settlers came upon the lake, but never stayed long. Guillermo then told Bell of the next Spanish settlers to build upon the lake: Don Chico Lopez and Don Chico Vasquez (said to be the brother of famed outlaw Tiburcio Vasquez).^[91] A ranch was established along the lake and for several months everything was fine.

Guillermo was himself a guest at the home one evening when Vasquez, the camp boss, ran into Lopez's home going on about a hellish disturbance on the surface of the lake. The two men followed Vasquez on horseback to the lakeshore to find the surface of the waters completely calm. As his boss chastised him, a high pitched whistling scream broke into the conversation. They turned their heads to a growth of tules on the lake and at that point noticed a sickening smell that made them all reel in their saddles.^[92] Then, in clear daylight, they observed the following in Guillermo's words via Bell:

After bringing our horses under control we turned and gazed back at the lake. From our position we could discern the outlines of a huge

monster, larger than the greatest whale, with enormous batlike wings. At times it would flap these wings as though attempting to rise from the mud where it lay. It would roar and splash the water with what appeared to be great flippers or legs.^[93]

That night the men had difficulty sleeping, but no monster attacks occurred. That morning they went to the lake armed with guns, but still, the monster didn't return, so they went back home to eat breakfast. Though they didn't see the monster again for some time livestock and animals started disappearing in high quantities. "Finally one night a great uproar was heard in the corral and by the time the neck arrows reached the spot ten mares with their foals were missing. And against the night sky was seen an incredible griffon winging away, heavy with feasting."^[94]

In light of this, Lopez sold out very cheaply to the Bosquo Grande ranch run by Miguel Leonis. The burly, harsh man was a Basque immigrant who controlled a large amount of land in Southern California. Squatters on his land were usually dealt with severely through lawsuits or extreme force. The monster, of course, didn't care what a tough *hombre* Leonis was and began eating his animals too. Leonis waited for the monster one night and shot it with his gun, but the bullets merely bounced off its tough hide. According to legend, Leonis became so enraged that he beat it over the nose with his rifle butt and punched it in the eye! Instead of eating him, the monster retreated back to the lake, or so legend says. Leonis too eventually left the property.^[95]

Three years later, in 1886, articles began to run in the newspapers (like the one listed previously in this chapter published in August of 1886). The following article was published in October of that same year:

A python,^[96] or at least a monster of some kind most terrible to behold, has made its appearance at Elizabeth Lake and has caused more terror and excitement among the people of that locality than did the great earthquake of 1855 which rent the earth asunder, leaving the present appearance of an old canal or the grade of the cyclopean railroad. The earthquake did not frighten the lake people to any great extent for the simple reason that in 1855 there were no inhabitants in that windy locality.

The python or whatever it is, is not alone because there are many cattle, horses, sheep, pigs, chickens and people at the laguna now off which

the python delights to feed. We don't know positively that the monster has yet gorged itself on *corpus humanus*, but it is attested that at night he comes out of the water, then visits the corrals and fills up with sheep and calves, a half dozen at a time. Upon one occasion the monstrosity tried the temper of a regular Texas longhorn steer, which made such a kick and bellowing as brought Don Felipe Rivera to the *locus in quo*. He saw the python which at that moment had swallowed the bronco steer to the middle. But after a terrific struggle the victim freed itself and the monster, and disappointment and alarm, betook itself to the lake.

Don Felipe describes the monster as about 15 *varas* (forty-four feet) long and as large as four elephants. Large enough, indeed, to make a saddle horse for Gen. Brierly. It had a head very much like a bulldog, and Don Felipe thinks it has six legs. Of wings he is positive, which lie flat on the monsters back when not expanded.

Don Felipe Rivera, as his name indicates, is a don of the true Castilian blood who fears not hippogriffes, dragons nor devils, so he ran alongside the python as it floundered toward the lake and emptied his .44 caliber old-fashioned Colt into its side. "The bullets striking the monster's side sounded just as if they were striking against a great iron kettle," said Don Felipe. "One bullet bounced back and hit me and the next morning I picked up four that were as flat as coins. This is all true, on the honor of an hidalgo."

We learn that Don Felipe has come to town at the instance of the terrified Laguneros to consult and adopt ways and means to capture the python. The Sells Brothers have already sent an agent to the lake to report upon the best means of securing the monster alive and to decide if it is possible to handle it in the circus. The contract which Don Felipe has been astute enough to demand from Sells Brothers is on record and can be seen. It covenants as follows: "that if the python is such as the party of the first part describes it to be, and if the party of the first part succeeds in taking it alive, then the party of the second part agrees to pay the party of the first part the sum of \$20,000."^[97]

But, the monster never was captured. Instead, it was observed departing the lake and flying eastward. In his book, Bell ends his chapter by concluding it was the same monster killed in Arizona. Bell includes a

noteworthy portion of a California article on the Tombstone article that also draws the same conclusion.

Such a bird, reptile or monster was seen about three years ago by three Mexican rancheros living near Elizabeth Lake. When first seen it was lashing itself about in the deep waters of the lake. The men took it for a bunch of cattle that had mired down and approached to see if they could save them when a winged creature of huge proportions rose into the air and flew heavily out of sight. The Mexicans story was told here and greatly ridiculed at the time.

It may prove, however, that in the desert fastnesses some of the prehistoric reptiles, supposed to have become extinct ages ago, still exists. The traditions of the Indians would seem to point to such a possibility.^[98]

Bell ends his chapter with the following summarization:

Thus runs the legend of Elizabeth Lake and I beg the reader to believe every line of this chapter because it is founded on the word of an Embustero y Mentiroso, hidalgo of the old blood, and others of equal credibility.^[99]

Sources:

Bell, Horrace. *On the Old West Coast: Being Further Reminiscences of a Ranger*. New York, NY: Grosset and Dunlap, 1930.

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“Snaik Stories”

WATER DRAGONS

The Elizabeth Lake Monster was listed in conjunction with another California lake monster in an article published that same decade. The story was printed in the *Los Angeles Herald* and reprinted in the *Daily Alta* on September 10, 1886. I include it here as a supplementary story:

Water Dragons in Los Angeles. They Are Killing All Large Fish in the Reservoirs.

A few weeks ago a water dragon was seen by several parties in Elizabeth Lake, and from this fact some fabulous stories were started, but they were too utterly wild to be published in the Herald. That there was a monster in Elizabeth Lake is well attested. Such amphibious creatures from time to time appear, but they are very scarce. A few years ago one of them appeared in the rivers of Southern Indiana.^[100] Nothing has recently been seen of the monster of Elizabeth Lake, but for the past three days a creature has taken up its abode in Reservoir No. 5, in East Los Angeles, and has scared the courage out of the fishermen at that place and destroyed all the large fish.

Yesterday morning, while a gentleman was fishing at the dam near the discharge gate, a monster appeared on the scene beneath the surface of the water and the fish fled in wild affright, and there was no more fish to be caught on that day. There was a monstrous commotion and splashing in the water, which seethed and boiled and rolled in a chop sea violently. In a short time a copious amount of blood arose to the surface and covered a large area with a bright vermilion. There was evidently a submarine battle and some creature got hurt, but the animals did not come to the surface. The man in charge of the reservoir has observed frequent and violent commotions in the water, but cannot describe the monsters.

If there are monsters there, it is evident that they are saurians that are sometimes called water dragons. The story of the flying saurian of Elizabeth Lake is believed by nobody. The flying saurian, if it ever existed, has been extinct for a millennium of years. If there are saurians in the city, they must have come from far and have been a long time on the road, as they travel rather slowly. The last seen, near Vincennes, Ind., was about five feet long,

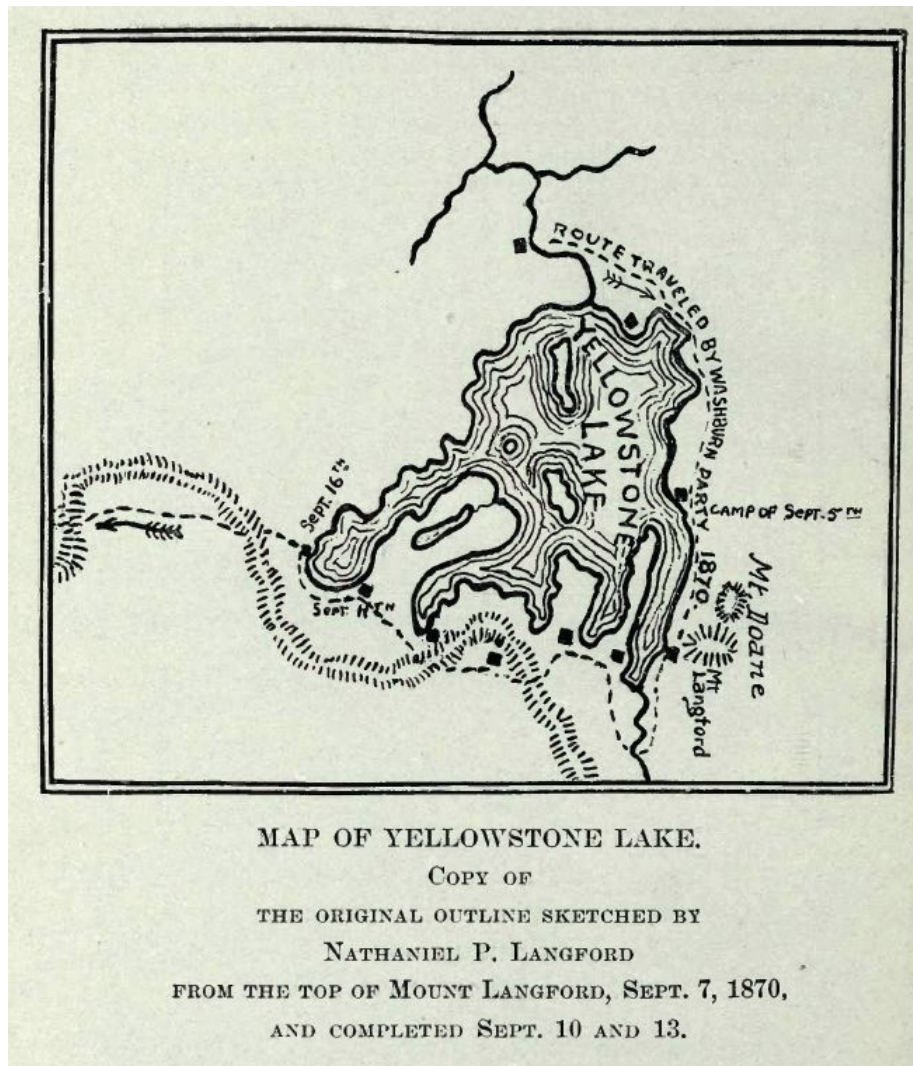
with a shockingly ugly head, a stump of a tail, and a body about the size of a child twelve years old. It was a very heavy animal and made a hissing sound when discovered.

The matter will be investigated and life made a burden to the unexpected visitors unless they travel to other fields of food.

THE RACING REPTILE OF YELLOWSTONE

SERPENT RACES STAGECOACH

YELLOWSTONE NATIONAL PARK was established by Congress and signed into law by President Ulysses S. Grant on March 1, 1872. It spans an area of 3,468.4 square miles and comprises of various canyons, mountains, lakes, and rivers. It is perhaps best known for the Old Faithful geyser and the Yellowstone Caldera, the largest super-volcano in North America. This frightening volcano has erupted several times within the last two million years and could do so again. In fact, half of the world's geysers and hydrothermal features are located in Yellowstone and fueled by this underground super-volcano. In summary, Yellowstone is the perfect abode for a dinosaur.^[101] Though no cryptids other than Bigfoot are reported in Yellowstone today, in late July of 1886 a cryptid of the saurian variety was sighted.



A Huge Reptile in Yellowstone Park

CINNABAR, Mont., July 30.—A stage driver and two tourists, while near Yellowstone lake, claim to have seen an enormous reptile which, while running through the grass, carried its head ten to fifteen feet above the ground. They think it must have been at least thirty feet long. A party was organized to pursue the reptile. Colonel Wear, superintendent of the park, and his assistant, Captain Barronette, while near the cave of an extinct geyser in the vicinity of the lake, heard a hissing and saw the head of the reptile thrust out some fifteen feet and immediately withdraw. Parties are searching for another sight of the monster.

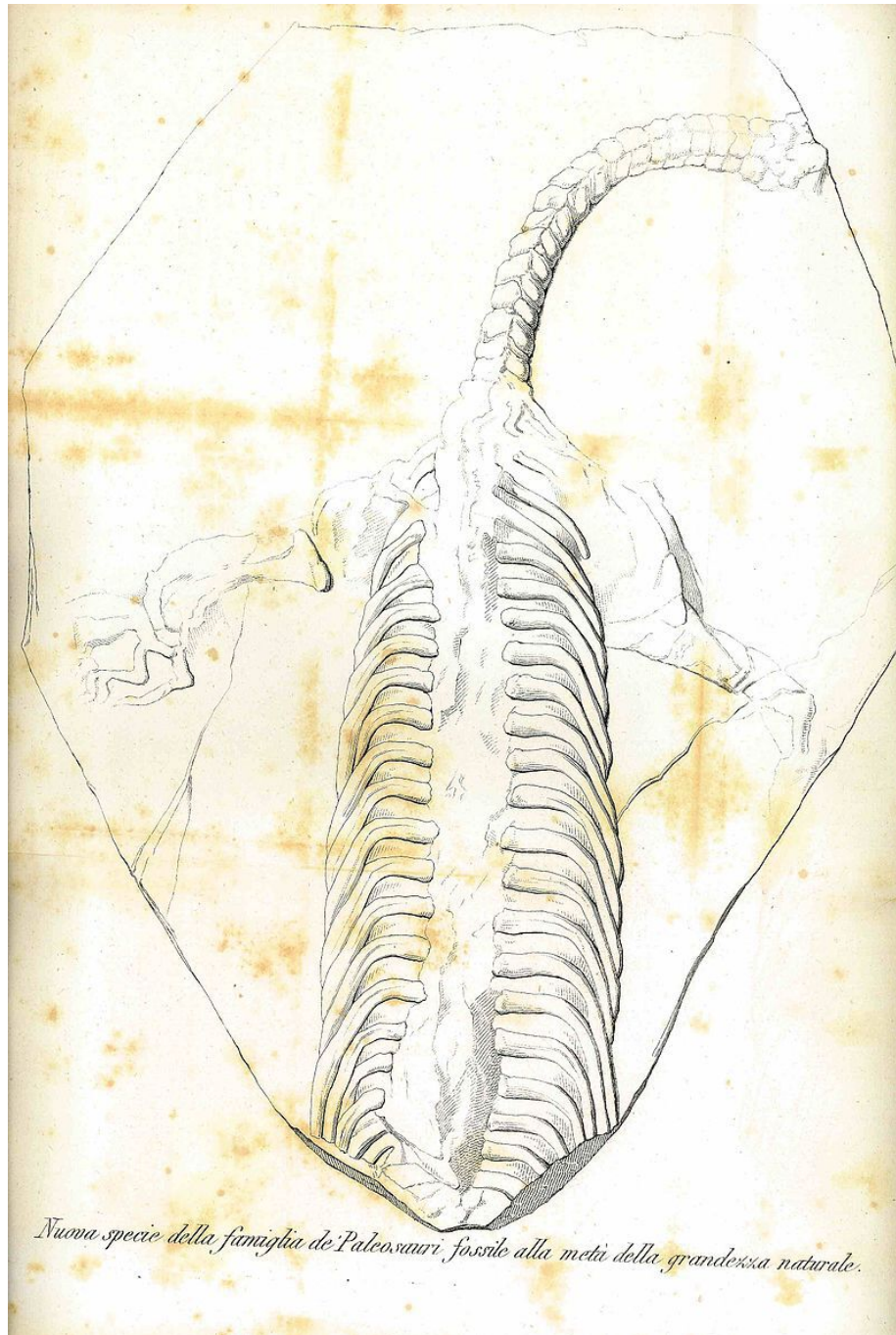
Onto the particulars, first off, the names mentioned are those of real men. Colonel David W. Wear, the new superintendent of the park, was chosen to replace the old superintendent by a senator in 1885. Wear was himself a senator at the time he was instated as superintendent and was described as “a thoroughly honest man” who would “make an active and intelligent superintendent.”^[102] Captain Jack Barronette was an early Yellowstone guide who also built and operated the first bridge across the Yellowstone River in 1871. In 1884, two years before this article, he was considered for the superintendency of Yellowstone. What’s more, Baronette Peak, located in the Park’s northeast corner, is named for him. That these two men claimed to see the monster lends the story some credence. Then again, though “honest” men, they may not have viewed faking a monster sighting to be dishonest in the interest of tourism.

As to the creature, it’s unfortunate that a better description wasn’t given (presumably the lower half of the body was obscured by the grass and other foliage). We can deduct one thing though, it was most likely a long-necked creature, as evidenced by Colonel Wear claiming that it “thrust [its head] out some fifteen feet” from a cave. Though implied to be a water monster in association with Yellowstone Lake, our usual suspect, the plesiosaurus, would not be able to run on flippers—let alone keep up a pace with a stagecoach. As such, perhaps the creature was a type of brontosaurus? A bipedal theropod dinosaur with a longer neck is also a candidate. Actually, just such a candidate is put forth in the story’s lone follow-up article published on page two of the August 2, 1886, edition of the *Boston Post*. It’s sparse on new details overall but does offer up a theory as to the creature’s identity. That said, this was all likely speculation, and that the writer was privy to new information is unlikely.

It is difficult to account for the simultaneous appearance of monsters in various parts of the country this year; for, although it is the dull season according to the calendar, fortune has thus far favored the news gatherers, and the summer hotel attractions have not required any fictitious assistance. But, close upon the appearance of the now familiar sea serpent of North Shore, there has followed the capture of a strange creature, part seal and part turtle, and the waters about block island, whose description presents stranger points than have ever been conceived in connection with the sea serpent; while from the

Yellowstone Park there comes the story of an enormous reptile inhabiting an extinct geyser, which makes excursions through the surrounding wilderness, carrying its head raised to 15 feet above its body by a long neck and hissing as it goes. The sea serpent we know; the block island marvel loses something of its strangeness when it is called a “rubber turtle,” although this designation may not convey a very distinct idea to many minds; but in the Dragon of the Yellowstone Park we have a novel monster, a resurrected paleosaurus of the tertiary formation, which deserves the distinguished consideration of tourists.

The article says that the animal was long-necked which, though implied in the previous article, was never confirmed exactly. It also puts forth the notion that the creature in question is specifically a Paleosaur. How this conclusion was reached by the article’s author is unknown. In any case, the Paleosaurus was discovered all the way back in 1836. As a long-necked theropod, it’s actually an ideal candidate for the Yellowstone Lake monster. The Paleosaur, which has a “convoluted taxonomic history” as Wikipedia puts it, had made headlines in 1878 when an isolated tooth was found in Triassic rocks in Pennsylvania. However, today the tooth is actually regarded as belonging to a sauropodomorph. In 1881, another “paleosaur” discovery was made which is now recognized as a phytosaur. In essence, lots of fossils were called Paleosaurs for years without a consistent definition of the dinosaur type. Today, the long-necked Paleosaur is known as the *Efraasia*. The herbivorous dinosaur hailed from the late Triassic and could reach lengths of 20 feet, close to the 30 foot Yellowstone monster.



Paleosaurus Fossil drawing c.1839.

It may well be that the Yellowstone “Paleosaur” was an invention to attract tourists—or that the monster was itself a tourist merely passing through. As it is, there is no resident lake monster that resides in Yellowstone Lake. That’s not to say Yellowstone Lake doesn’t have a very odd attribute, which we could even associate with the monster if we

“stretched” it. Though no monsters are seen in the lake, very strange noises have been reported there for years.

The first was reported in 1872, the very year the park was established, by the Hayden Expedition which was surveying the park region. “While getting breakfast, we heard every few moments a curious sound, between a whistle and a hoarse whine, whose locality and character we could not at first determine,” wrote expedition member F.H. Bradley. They were written of again by biology professor, Edwin Linton, in 1892 while engaged in a U.S. Fish Commission project. In 1895 Captain Hiram Martin Chittendon, of the Army Corps of Engineers, wrote of the mysterious sounds in a journal of the park titled *Historical and Descriptive*. He wrote,

A most singular and interesting acoustic phenomenon of this region, although rarely noticed by tourists, is the occurrence of strange and indefinable overhead sounds. They have long been noted by explorers, but only in the vicinity of Shoshone and Yellowstone Lakes. They seem to occur in the morning, and to last only a moment. They have an apparent motion through the air, the general direction noted by writers being from north to south.

They resemble the ringing of telegraph wires or the humming of a swarm of bees, beginning softly in the distance, growing rapidly plainer until directly overhead, and then fading as rapidly in the opposite direction.



Could these mysterious noises in some way be related to the monster that allegedly lived within the extinct geyser in 1886? Probably not, but it's an interesting side detour into the lake's history all the same. Aside from the theory that the dinosaur story was cooked up to lure in tourists, as far as remnant dinosaur sightings go there's nothing outlandish or "unusual" about it—as far as these things go—to knock it out of the realm of credibility. Perhaps the creature was just passing through, made its home within the park for a time, and then either moved onto parts unknown or died—it's bones perhaps resting at the bottom of the lake...

Sources:

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LASSOING A BIG LIZARD

MISPLACED MONITOR LIZARD?

THE WORLD OF CRYPTOZOOLOGY isn't focused strictly on unknown animals. It occasionally studies misplaced animals—that being an animal native to a certain locale or climate that pops up where it should not. Alien Big Cats, for instance, are a good example of this phenomenon. An example would be a panther roaming around the backwoods of North Carolina, an area it is not indigenous to. Alligators in the sewers are another prime example.

Our next story is set in Indiana, a state that produces a voluminous amount of snake stories for some reason. Rather than a dinosaur, it would seem our creature in question here is a misplaced monitor lizard of some sort. Read on and see if you agree.

A “WHAT IS IT.”

**A Monster Serpent That Has Been The Terror Of Man And Beast
Brought To Bay And Captured**

**100 Citizens Track the Monster Down and After a Most
Determined Struggle Lasso It**

And Bring it to Town with Shouts of Victory

**Other Hundreds View the Remains with Great Satisfaction and
Admiration of the Prowess of the Brave Men Who Risked Their
Lives to Save Others from a Horrible Death**

The Daily Mercury is at the Death

For a number of years past, as sure as the seasons roll around, there has been an annual crop of stories brought to town about some snake or other monster being seen south of the city by voracious hunters, reliable hunting parties, or fugacious dairy pickers, who have been scared from the old fields or thickets by his snakeship's untimely appearance.

As to the size of this reptilian terror stories have varied greatly, but we think a general average would place it at from 7 to 8 feet in length, and the width of the track made in crossing a dusty road has varied considerably, safe from 4 to 6, or 7 inches in width.

We suppose there are, at a very moderate calculation, at least 100 persons in the city, of greater or less veracity who have at some time in their lives actually seen the monster, which has in some instances almost stood up and with lurid eyes stared them in the face with an impudence seldom surpassed by satan himself.

This summer and particularly within the last two or three weeks encounters with the snakey terror have become more and more frequent, but our people have been so incredulous that it was almost as much as an average person's veracity was worth to profess to have actually met it.

About two weeks ago, perhaps, Mr. Davis, living south of town, distinctly saw the monster which was nearly coal black, lying across the turnpike not far from the cemetery. To him it did not seem more than seven or eight feet long, but it was very thick; thicker than a man's thigh, and certainly had four legs a foot or less in length and thick as a man's forearm. Mr. Davis is regarded as a [sic] veracious man and duly sober, and scores of our people implicitly believed every word he said, no doubt, but had "not the courage of convictions," and so only smiled in a way that was calculated to wound Mr. Davis's feelings. His horse also saw it and could scarcely be driven past at the spot where it was lying, even after it had been gone for some minutes.

On Thursday, however, all skepticism came near being banished when Clark Hosier^[103] saw it in broad daylight glide from southbound cemetery, cross the turnpike and hastily disappear through the fence into the thicket on the east side. Mr. Hosier's horse saw the monster first and was scared and Clark was evidently frustrated, and meeting Mr. S.T. Powell^[104] soon after, with every symptom of great excitement,

described to him the monster and pointed out his trail about 12 to 15 inches wide where it had “dragged its slow length along.” He said it was nearly as big around as a man’s body, and about 16 or 17 feet long. Mr. Powell had the utmost confidence in Hosier’s veracity, and considerable in his judgment, although he admitted that from the looks of his eyes he must have been excited and, so coming up to town, he insisted in a search being made as there was *something in the matter*.

People in livery rigs, in the ‘bus and on foot flocked to the scene of action at once; a representative of the DAILY MERCURY among the former, though it was “neck and neck” to see who should first spy the strange creature the trail was very plain, except just inside the woods fence, and led as straight to the Root & Hart slaughterhouse as a bee would go from a buckwheat patch to its hive. It is understood that a calf has now and then been missing from the slaughter pens, and the monster was once seen with a hog’s foot projecting from its ravenous jaws. Diligent search was made in and under the building, and the searches were about to conclude that it had escaped when Jim Moeller thoughtfully turned up a box and there lay the monster coiled up in all its hideous ugliness apparently asleep. A rope was [indecipherable] thrown around its neck, and by the aid of brave hearts and strong arms, the monster was strangled and jerked from the building and was dead in less time than it takes to tell it so restless was the grasp kept on the rope.

Signal guns were fired to recall the various hunting parties that were scouring the woods in all directions. Shouts of triumph went up over the grand and bloodless termination of the expedition, and the lifeless corpse of the monster, which proved to be about 16 feet in length, 24 inches in girth and about 12 inches between the eyes, was dragged to the city with all the speed the jaded horses would allow. Here it lay in state and was viewed by hundreds of excited people.

This article is already of great length, and we have only room to say that the hideous object was something between a chestnut and crushed coffee sack in color, although we are assured that before shed it was nearly black.

NOTES.

Senator Bundy said in our presence that he remembered seeing the snake 25 years ago.

Many went out to see the big “snaik.” One young lady who saw only a large amount of coffee sacking was almost vexed because they did not tell her before it was packed for shipping.

W.R. Wilson examined the trail where the snake crawled through the cemetery fence, when he saw hair on the board every doubt vanished, and he said he would have given Nichol to have seen it go through.

This story was published in the *New Castle Mercury* out of Henry County, Indiana on July 20, 1883. To summarize the creature, it sounds very much like a standard, quadruped monitor lizard. The initial dimensions of seven to eight feet in length fit a Komodo Dragon exactly.^[105] So too do the bodily proportions described as being “thicker than a man’s thigh” with four legs that were “a foot or less in length and thick as a man’s forearm.”



First ever photo of Komodo Dragon c.1912.

But if this creature so greatly resembled a Komodo Dragon, why wasn’t it identified as such? The answer is simple. At the time Komodo Dragons had yet to be discovered by Caucasians. The first white man to discover the

big lizards was Lieutenant Jacques Karel Henri van Steyn van Hensbroek in 1910. Hensbroek was stationed on Flores Island in eastern Indonesia when someone told him of a large “land crocodile” that lived on the nearby island of Komodo. Hensbroek traveled to the island where he killed, photographed and skinned a specimen. He sent the photograph to Pieter Ouwens, director of the Java Zoological Museum and Botanical Gardens in Buitenzorg.

But if our beast was indeed a Komodo Dragon, how did it get there? While I believe this story is more credible than many of the others in this book, that is one question I can’t even begin to answer. Like the Alien Big Cats, all we know is that people claimed to see it, but we may never know how it got there.

Sources:

History of Henry County, Indiana: Together with Sketches of Its Cities, Villages, and Towns ... Also a Condensed History of Indiana, Embracing Accounts of Pre-historic Races, Aborigines, Winnebago and Black Hawk Wars, and a Brief Review of Its Civil and Political History. Henry County, Indiana: Inter-State Publishing Company, 1884.

STEER SLAUGHTERED BY SEA SERPENT

THE OHIO RIVER MONSTER

THOUGH THERE ARE several tales in this book where a horse or cow meets its untimely end in the mouth of a monster, I think this might be the only instance where it could be true. Adding to the credibility is that the Ohio River monster was sighted for many years across several articles in different papers. One of the first accounts came on January 11, 1878, when Ben Karrick saw the monster while he was driving his horse-drawn delivery wagon over the Roebling Suspension Bridge. He wrote to the *Cincinnati Gazette* telling them that,



Roebling Suspension Bridge.

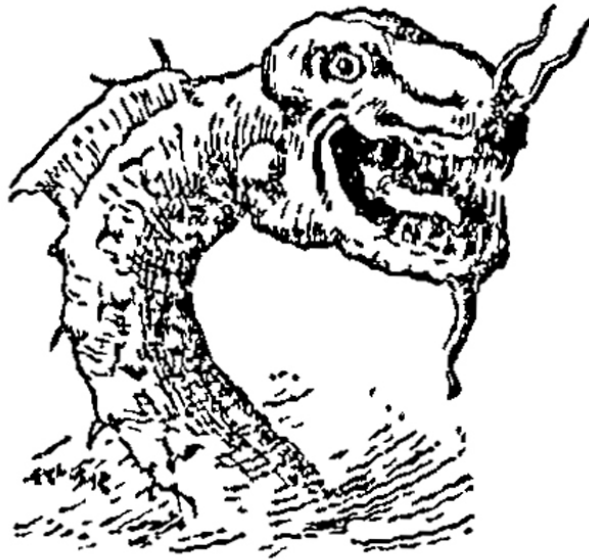
“Protruding from the water some twelve or fifteen feet was what seemed to be the head of a huge serpent or animal, that was rushing through the water at a very rapid rate, and occasionally lashing the water with its tail into a perfect foam.”

“Its head and neck seemed to me to be covered by a black glossy substance like hair, and further back from the head, the hide looked like that of an alligator. The head was shaped somewhat similar to that of a sea horse, which we have so often seen in pictures.”^[106]

Karrick wasn’t the only one who saw the monster. John Davidson, captain of the *Silver Moon* steamboat, saw it as well when he was docked at Vevay, Indiana. He wrote the *Cincinnati Enquirer* on the same day that Karrick had written the *Gazette*:

“I had no faith in the reports I had read of the river monster, so graphically described in the newspapers, but I am now convinced of

the actual existence of the terrible beast. At one time it reared its head high above the surface of the water in the manner of the sea lions of the Zoological Gardens of your city. The long pelican beak, the slimy mane, and the extreme serpentine length of the animal answer exactly to the previous descriptions that have been published.”



Though the serpent was likely seen several more times in the interval, our story resumes six years later via an article published in the March 14, 1884, *New Harmony Register*:

A SPRING SNAKE YARN

**A Terrible Monster Swimming
in the Ohio River**

Special to the Evansville Courier.

SHAWNEETOWN, ILL., March 8.—There is great excitement here over the report that a sea serpent had been seen between Shawneetown and the mouth of the Wabash several times during this afternoon, and several parties are out in skiffs to capture it. Many shots were fired at the serpent, but he seemed to escape injury. Tonight, just as we were

about a mile from Shawneetown, the pilot called out that there was trouble ahead, and sure enough there was, for the serpent (or whatever it was) could be plainly seen coming up the river, going like a race-horse, splashing the water and lashing its tail furiously. The animal just missed our wheel, going by us like a flash. A number of shots were fired but they had no effect. The boat was quickly stopped but we could see nothing of him. It is reported here that a number of hogs and cows have disappeared in the last day or two near the mouth of the Wabash, and it is supposed that this animal has been the cause. It seemed to be half as long as our boat, and snorted and bellowed at a fearful rate. Many of our deck crew thought it was the devil, and went to praying. Warn all steamboat men of this terrible monster.

Harry Proctor
Clerk Steamer Vint Shinkle

THE 'H.T. DEXTER' ENCOUNTERS THE ANIMAL

[Evansville Courier, March 9th.]

To those who may doubt in any particular the following statements which have been furnished the river-editor of this paper, we simply have to say that the truthfulness of our account can be verified by the best authority known in river circles, or in this community.

Our readers will doubtless remember that at several times during the last two or three years it has been reported at different points on the Ohio and Mississippi rivers that a sea serpent or river monster had appeared, which attacked steamboats, warfboats, flat-boats, or anything that happened to come in its way, and caused much fear and consternation all along the line of its appearance. The Courier, together with other reputable newspapers, paid no attention to the reports, but regarded them as the effusions of some diseased reportorial mind. That they had a substantial foundation in fact, however, is at last clearly proven. The following particulars have been gleaned from persons of undoubted reliability and unquestioned integrity. Accordingly, we give them to our readers as the plain unvarnished truth.

On the trip of the "H.T. Dexter" from Cairo, day before yesterday she landed at Hurricane, Ky., and laid there sometime for the purpose of taking on a considerable amount of stock and freight. While driving the stock on board, a large steer, which weighed about 1800 pounds,

became fractious and jumped overboard. Endeavors were energetically made to rescue it, but after disappearing under the water for a few minutes the rear half only was seen to rise. In other words, the animal had from some unaccountable cause been divided into two parts, the one mentioned only appearing on top of the water. This naturally excited considerable surprise, and many explanatory theories were indulged in by those who witnessed the scene. In the meantime one of the deckhands had thrown out a dirty pair of overalls into the river for the purpose of washing them, and had them attached to a piece of $\frac{3}{4}$ inch line 25 or 30 feet long, the line being fastened to one of the cavel. He was standing aft of the boilers, talking to another of his fellows, when his attention was suddenly attracted to the fact that the line was jerked taut with a vengeance and that the stern of the boat was being carried out into the stream. He at once took hold of the line and endeavored to draw it on board, but his efforts proved unavailing. He immediately notified Capt. Damron that something was wrong, and the captain had the engines reversed at once and started the boat backward so as to swing her stern into position again. The wheel had made only two revolutions, when a violent shot convinced everyone on board that they had "struck something." Then the excitement commenced. Becoming convinced at last that the object, whatever it was, that had hold of the line was the cause of all the disturbance, the crew were ordered to take hold and pull the thing on board. After considerable difficulty the most astonishing site ever presented to the frightened gaze of a lot of negro roustabouts was seen to appear out of the flood, and a stampede to the rear at once ensued. Capt. Damron, however, encouraged them by word and action, and this exhibition of bravery on his part soon rallied the flying forces. Another pool and a strong pull together was made and the awful looking creature, by the aid of the captain and another line, was landed on deck. It was in reality a monster. It had swallowed the heavy overalls of the roaster, which had a cotton-hook fastened to the belt, and the hook caught inside and held him fast to the line. The animal had the head of a bull and the mouth of an alligator, the tale of the serpent and the body of a hippopotamus. Its roar was a kind of cross between that of a tiger and a lion. Its length was fully 45 feet, and its general appearance calculated to strike terror into the bravest heart. After floundering around on deck for a few

moments it leaped about 5 feet in the air, jumped overboard and disappeared in the river, the cotton hook pulling loose.

Words cannot picture the sensation produced in the minds of those on board the “Dexter.” Capt. Damron says he never again wants to see such a terrible looking beast. He gave him a shock he could not describe, and he now believes in a veritable sea serpent. Parties are looking in all directions for the reappearance of the monster, but none of them appear to be very anxious to affect its capture.

Sources:

Hand, Greg. “Sea Serpents in the Ohio River.” *Cincinnati Magazine*. (November 1, 2016) <https://www.cincinnati-magazine.com/citywiseblog/sea-serpents-ohio-river-cincinnati-monsters/>

“Snaik Stories”

SON OF THE

OHIO RIVER MONSTER

This tale describes what appears to be a juvenile version of the Ohio River monster being roped and wrangled onto the shore.

AN OHIO RIVER MONSTER

Owensboro Inquirer.

Rumors have been afloat for some time of the existence of a sea monster in the Ohio river at a point a few miles below Evansville. Very little credence was given to the report, but the presence of the “What-it-is” seems to have been a veritable fact. A few days ago the monster was seen by parties on the Indiana side disporting himself in shallow water—in fact he had run aground—or at least, was rubbing bottom and kicking up a fearful dust. The alarm was given and preparations at once made for his capture. Ropes and poles were procured, and after a deal of maneuvering a rope was passed around the body of the monster and he was pulled ashore, the combined strength of eight or ten men being required to land him. He is about five feet in length and very vicious. Huge scales cover his body, and these, when the creature is disturbed, stand upon end like “quills upon the fretful porcupine.” He has ponderous jaws and seizes and crushes fence rails into tooth-picks, when thrust at him. His captors will take him to Evansville next Saturday and negotiate his sale with the proprietor of Forepaugh’s show.

MONSTER OF THE MOKELUMNE RIVER

A CALIFORNIA FISH TALE

DUE TO PREJUDICES of the time, one of the unsung heroes of the Old West was the Asian American settler, often referred to collectively at the time as “Chinamen”. Most Asian American settlers arrived on the West Coast during the 1850s and the 1860s. There they began to work predominantly in the gold mines and on the railroad. Due to prejudice, they were forced out of the mines. Similarly, many of the Asian Americans hired by the Central Pacific Railroad were forced out of the very railroad towns they had helped to build when the work was done in 1869. As such, many Asian Americans lived in communities that were often dubbed as a “Chinatown”.



"Across the Continent" by Joseph Becker.

There exists an account of a struggle between several Asian Americans and some sort of strange, presumably prehistoric monster in the Mokelumne River in northern California. During the California Gold Rush, the river was a major source for the panning of gold. As the California Gold Rush had more or less ended by 1855, the witnesses involved in this story, which takes place in 1881, were most likely not there to pan for gold. Presumably, they were there to fish, and did they ever catch—or try to catch—the “big one”. This story comes from the *Reno Evening Gazette* from the September 10, 1881 edition.

A Mokelumne River Monster.

Upon the highest Celestial authority there is at the present time inhabiting the Mokelumne river, only a few miles from this place, a short distance above the Big Bar bridge between Jackson and Mokelumne Hill, a water monster that has spread consternation and terror among our entire Chinese population. They assert that one day this week a number of them were on the river just below the old Boston mill site, when they saw what they supposed to be a large fish near the top of the water, and one of their party made a leap into the water to capture the prize. But no sooner had he struck the water than the monster turned upon its would-be captor, and instantly drew him under, from whence he had not arisen at last accounts. The monster is said to have teeth like a dog, and to have powerful strength, as the man was as nothing in his grasp. The Chinamen who witnessed the tragical fate of their unfortunate countryman, concluded that the thing was the devil, and fled for their lives. It is also claimed that another Chinaman lost his life in about the same manner, near this place, several years ago, and it is thought that this is the same monster returned, if indeed he has not inhabited the Mokelumne ever since. While we are not prepared to vouch for the truth of this story, yet it is evident that something has occurred or been seen on the river to excite our Chinese citizens and put them ill at ease. Some of our daring and curious citizens talk of getting up a party to investigate the matter, and, if possible, capture the monster, which they believe to be the *Calaveras Chronicle*'s long lost

Snake, which has not been heard of since Higby went into the Internal Revenue Department.—*Amador Dispatch*.

It's too bad no real description is given to the monster other than being a "monster fish". Not even an inclination of the general size is given. It's odd, however, that they liken the beast to the Calaveras Snake, which as its name implies was a giant snake. Could we then assume that the monster had some serpent-like qualities that the author of the article neglected to mention? Or, perhaps he was just poking fun at the monster by comparing it to the one from Calaveras.

“Snake Stories”

HATCHET VS. SERPENT

And for further adventures of Asian American settlers battling river monsters in California...

From the *Ohio Marion Daily Star* on January 16, 1882: A couple of Chinamen, while fishing in the Sacramento River near Chico landing, were attacked by a large snake, which quelled about one of them. The other Chinaman seized a hatchet and cut the monster to pieces. They proceeded to measure it, and, placing together the parts severed, it measured 43 feet and 7 inches, and was as large around as a man's leg.

FRESNO'S FLYING DRAGONS

A PTEROSAUR HUNT FOR THE AGES

FROM FRESNO comes to us yet another fantastic pterosaur tale from 1891—one year after the famous Tombstone story. And, as usual, the creatures are described as looking like “alligators with wings”. But, unlike the Tombstone article, this piece has the good sense to identify the creatures as pterodactyls. The Fresno sighting is also interesting because it’s similar to the pterodactyl sightings of Elizabeth Lake in California in that the monster inhabited the water. This was also the case of a pterosaur sighting in a Florida swamp in 1895. [\[107\]](#)

The Fresno story was covered in several different articles in different papers, so it apparently caused a stir at the time the events took place in July of 1891.

The first article on the incident gives a good summary of the incident as a whole so we shall begin with it:

Dragons in California

A number of persons living in the vicinity of Reedley, Fresno county, Cal., all reputable citizens, too, according to a Chronicle correspondent, swear that they have seen and hunted two dragons with wings fifteen feet long, bodies without covering of hair or feathers, head broad, bills long and wide, eyes not less than four inches in diameter, and with feet like those of an alligator somewhat, though more circular in form.

They had five toes on each foot, with a strong claw on each, and its track is eleven inches wide and nineteen inches long.

These strange creatures were first seen southeast of Selma, on the night of July 11, and their peculiar cries and the rustling of their mammoth wings were heard as late as 10 o'clock, when all became still. The dragons were last heard that night crying in the direction of King's river.

Two nights later, A. X. Simmons's poultry yard was visited by the monsters, many of the hens being bitten in two and left partly devoured. Those who examined the dead chickens say the teeth marks on them resemble those made by a very large dog.

On July 19 a carriage loaded with picnickers was returning from a picnic on Clark's bridge, and in the clear moonlight saw the monsters plainly circling in the air and heard the rush of their pinions, snapping of their jaws and fearful cries overhead. ^[108]



Victorian era pterosaur depiction.

From here, the article goes on to detail an encounter between two men and the monsters. Since it is described in greater detail in the August 5, 1891, issue of the *Los Angeles Herald*, we shall switch over to it now:

**Sport Gunning for Dragons Near Fresno.
Monstrosities Which Are Half Alligators, Half Birds.**

The Wild, Weird Story of a Fresno Newspaper Man.

**Two Screaming Dragons Snap Their Jaws and Show Their Teeth—
Six Feet Long and Look Like Frogs**

The Fresno sportsman now goes gunning for pterodactyls. These are dragons who lived in the carboniferous age, but who forgot to get petrified when the Fresno man and woman went through that process for the special benefit of nineteenth century dime museum owners. A letter from Fresno to the San Francisco Chronicle of Monday tells the Munchausen story, and from it the following excerpts are taken:

Fresno, July 31.—The report that two strange dragons with wings have recently appeared in the swamps east of Selma was at first regarded by many as a sensational story without foundation in fact, but after different persons at different places had claimed to have seen the strange creatures it began to be thought worth investigating.

The history of the unusual visitors, so far as reported, is as follows:

The men who live along the swales and sand hollows east and southeast of Selma on the evening of July 13th heard strange sounds in the air just after dark, like the rushing of wings when some large bird passes swiftly through the air overhead. At the same time a cry was heard, resembling that of a swan, though enough different to make it plain it was not a swan. But on that evening nothing was seen. The sound of the rushing of wings and peculiar cries were heard at intervals for two hours, when about 10 o'clock all became still. The last cries heard were far away in the direction of King's river...

On Monday night, July 21st, Harvey Lemmon and Major Henry Haight were out looking after their hogs that feed in the tules. As the men were returning to Selma they were surprised to hear a strange, strangling noise in the deep water under the bridge. In a moment there was a heavy flapping of wings and the two monsters rose slowly from the water and flew so near the men that the wind from their wings was plainly felt.

Mr. Haight described the dragons as resembling birds, except that they had no feathers, and their heads were broad and their bills long and wide. He judged that the expanse of their wings was not less than fifteen feet. Their bodies were without covering [and] their eyes were very large—Mr. Haight was sure not less than four inches in diameter. .

..

J. D. Daniels, of Sanger, heard of the matter, and on Wednesday went over to Selma and joined those who were going out to capture the dragons. Your correspondent saw Mr. Daniels today and had from him the account of the searching party. It is better given in Mr. Daniels's words:

“When I reached Selma I found the company, which, with me, consisted of five persons, preparing to go down to Hog Lake to set watch. This is a small pond of water, and was considered as liable as any to be visited by the monsters.

“We drove out to the lake, and there being no brush convenient for a hiding place, we dug holes in the bank, and soon after dark we took our places in the holes with our guns, ready to see what could be done in case the visitors put in an appearance.

“We remained there till 3 o’clock in the morning, and nothing of an unusual nature having taken place we returned to Selma, somewhat disappointed.

“About 10 o’clock that day, Thursday, Emanuel Jacobs came in and reported that the monsters had evidently been in Horn Valley, about four miles above, the night before. They had killed a number of ducks, and the banks of the pond were strewn with feathers.

“We had no intention of giving over the plan of capturing the dragons, and Thursday night two of us returned to watch—Mr. Templeton and myself. We secreted ourselves in the holes which we had made the night before and waited patiently with our guns, determined to secure one of the strange visitors at least, should they make their appearance.

“About 11 o’clock the cries were heard in the direction of King’s River, seeming two or three miles away. The ominous yells drew nearer, and in a few moments we heard the rush and roar of wings, so hideous that our hair almost stood on end. The two dragons came swooping down and circled round and round the pond in rapid whirls, screaming hideously all the while. We had a good view of them while flying. Two or three times they passed within a few yards of us, and their eyes were plainly visible. We could also see that instead of bills like birds they had snouts resembling that of the alligator, and their teeth could be seen as they snapped their jaws while passing us.

“Evidently the dragons were trying to decide whether or not they should come down in the pond. They were probably examining if there was any food to be had, such as ducks, mudhens and-fish.

“At length they came down with a fearful plunge into the pond, and the mud and water flew as though a tree had fallen into it.

“They dived and floundered around in the water, and as nearly as we could judge at the distance of thirty yards they were about six feet long, and while wading in the water they looked not unlike gigantic frogs. Their wings were folded, and appeared like large knobs on their backs.

Their eyes were the most visible parts, and seemed all the time wide open and staring.

“They were very active, and darted about among the tules and rushes catching mudhens. One of these fowls was devoured at two or three clamps of the jaws.

“As soon as we saw a good opportunity we leveled our guns at the one nearest us and fired. One rose into the air with a yell and flew away, every stroke of the wings showing immense strength.

“The other floundered about in the water till it reached the edge of the pond, when it crawled out, dragging a long wounded wing after it, and started across the plain. We loaded our guns and gave chase. We soon lost sight of it, for it went much faster than we could. However, we were able to follow by its dismal cries in the distance. We followed it half a mile, when it passed out of our hearing.

“The next day a company went in pursuit and trailed it by the blood on the grass. It was followed three miles to the Juniper slough, which it entered and all trace of it was lost. Whether it is yet concealed in the tules or whether it has died is not known.

“Where it passed down the bank it left several well-formed tracks in the mud. One of the best was cut out with a spade, and, after drying, was taken to Selma, where it is in the possession of Mr. Snodgrass. The track was like that of an alligator, though more circular in form. It had five toes, with a strong claw on each. The track is eleven inches wide and nineteen long.”^[109]

The most probable solution of the matter is that these dragons are solitary specimens of some geological animal supposed to be extinct. It most nearly fits the description of the pterodactyl, a weird nocturnal vampire, half bat, half lizard, that infested the vast swamps of the earth in the carboniferous age. The pterodactyl is described by geologists as attaining a size often four times as large as the eagle, while the bill became a snout, and its mouth was set with ghastly teeth that devoured birds, reptiles and all small animals that came in its way.

It may be that this species of animal has not become entirely extinct, as has been supposed, but that these are veritable pterodactyls. It is now recalled that a strange monster resembling these was reported a few years ago in the vast swamp between Tulare lake and Kern lake.



*King's River c.1972 by Gene Daniels.
Library of Congress.*

The story caused quite a stir and was followed by numerous articles poking fun at the story. On August 7th the *Weekly Republican* out of Fresno wrote that, "The Selma pterodactyls have taken their place alongside of the wild

man^[110] of King's River canyon and both should be buried in that icy grave of the mountain suicide..."

The August 11th *Daily Morning Republican* was even more scathing: "The Enterprise's article on the pterodactyl monster has been copied far and wide by nearly every newspaper in the country. The writer, quite naturally, has been called a liar, 4,000,000 times the last two weeks, and we are prone to believe that where there are so many of one mind, the majority must rule."

The article then goes on to claim that "a literary man...like all literary men, undertook at a recent picnic to drink up all the refreshments and ice cream on the grounds." In his drunken stupor, he dreamed of "fairyland, pterodactyls, hades and damnation."

The article claims he wrote of his dream and submitted it to the paper. This, of course, is not true—even if the story was a hoax that is most certainly not the way it was "dreamed up". The paper goes on to say that, "Nearly every paper which printed a rehash of the monster business added a few flourishes of its own until now we have a whole drove of pterodactyls who threaten to depopulate the country."

On August 14th the *Weekly Republican* claimed that the "Selma Dragons" were just "two Australian birds known in their native country as Boa." It claimed that the birds were "imported to this country by the Kaweah colonists, at great expense, and were expected to work their destructive arts on the government horses and mules in the Sequoia national park". This theory too is a farce meant for the amusement of the reader.

Unfortunately, the Fresno dragons were never seen again, but they were well remembered throughout the area for years. In fact, the incident resulted in J. B. Daniels being nicknamed "Pterodactyl" Daniels. For some years newspapers made fun of Daniels and the sighting both.

"A San Bernardino man with the d.t.'s has seen a monster twenty times as large as J. B. Daniels' pterodactyl." (Fresno, *Bee*, June 5, 1892.)

"Editor Dewey of the Sanger Herald, was in Fresno yesterday. He says the quality of Sanger's whiskey has improved and no more pterodactyls are seen there now." (Fresno, *Bee*, October 3, 1893.)

"A committee of the board of supervisors, accompanied by County Surveyor Hoxie and N. L. F. Bachman of The Republican, left Fresno yesterday morning on route to the Sequoia mills, where they will view

the new mountain road completed there, with the object of determining whether it has been constructed according to contract. ...Bachman is on a tour of adventure, and is expected to slaughter a grizzly or capture a pterodactyl alive ere he returns.” (Fresno, *Weekly Republican*, November 17, 1893.)

“C. J. Walker is here from the town of the pterodactyls.” (Fresno, *Weekly Republican*, October 5, 1894.)

“This is a great county for productiveness. It produces raisins, grain and pterodactyls for the rest of the world. ...” (Fresno, *Bee*, November 20, 1894.)

So what are we to make of this story? Though papers made fun of it, that didn’t mean that it couldn’t be real. On the one hand, the descriptions given were along the right lines of pterodactyls. The five-toed tracks are a bit odd though, as pterodactyls had four digits, not five.

Then there is also the issue of J. B. “Pterodactyl” Daniels, who some think was the main author of the lengthy August 5th article in the *Los Angeles Herald*. Whatever this case, Daniels (a real estate agent) got in trouble with the law due to his real estate dealings and disappeared from the area a few years later.

As one final aside, six years later in Acampo, California in January of 1897 there was another sighting of a winged something. Five people claimed to see a flying creature that they likened to a man with wings. Odder still, the creature emitted a fiery glow. Instead of a winged man could it have been a bioluminescent pterodactyl flying through the California skies?

Sources:

S8int.com. “Eyewitness Accounts Page 28: The Pterosaurs of Fresno County, California.”

<http://s8int.com/phile/eyewit28.html>

“Snaik Stories”

FRESNO DRAGONS CONT'D

The following is an extract from the *Fresno Weekly Republican* from December 23, 1892. In it, a writer under the pseudonym of “Consomme” gives a humorous rundown on the pterodactyls. Some think the letter was written by J.B. Daniels: “First—the pterodactyl, of Fresno dragon (latin, dragonis alligatis wingis), found only in the neighborhood of Selma, is a reprehensible, hirsute winged alligator. In size about equal to the common 2-year-old Durham heifer.

Is carnivorous and lives mostly on mud hens and the spawn of the house cat. It has an elongated body covered with fur like the sealskin of commerce. A tail similar to the musk-ox. Its most curious feature is a pair of bat-like wings growing out of the middle of its back and from twenty to thirty feet in length.

The animal’s head is almost exactly like that of the alligator. Its mouth is armed with eight rows of teeth about three inches in length. It is supposed to be the descendant of the ancient pterodactyl, crossed with the gnu [antelope] or horned horse, known to have once been common in these parts. It can be tamed and is very useful, when chloroformed and its wings clipped, as its fur is as fine as the fur-bearing seal, while its pedal extremities (it has legs like those of the wolf) are a great delicacy, highly prized by the natives of Selma.”

THE MARFA LIGHTS

BIOLUMINESCENT PTERODACTYLS OR UFOS?

THE MARFA LIGHTS of Texas first began puzzling pioneers as early as the 1840s. They were first sighted as orange balls of light in the sky by wagon trains on their way to San Antonio from Mexico. Though commonly linked to UFO/ Extraterrestrial phenomena, some believe the lights may actually be related to dinosaurs. Specifically, there is a theory that the lights are actually bio-luminescent pterosaurs, much like the Van Meter Monster covered in Chapter 9.

The idea that the famous Marfa Lights might be connected to pterosaurs comes courtesy of researcher Jonathan David Whitcomb who wrote that “....at least a few cryptozoologists believe the roper is a living pterosaur and the Marfa Lights may be related.”^[111] As it is, Whitcomb has collected several reports of luminescent pterosaurs from across the world. Since the Marfa Lights have yet to be explained, nocturnal, glowing pterosaurs are nearly as good of an explanation as small flying saucers.

The first clue is in the Marfa Light’s behavior. One man observed one of the lights descend into a bush and then stay there. In another instance, the light flew up the side of a cliff and then seemed to perch itself on the top. This behavior, it could be argued, shows some sort of flying predator out catching bugs and other animals for food. Occasionally two of the orbs will conjoin together, perhaps a pair of mating pterodactyls? Even the frequency of the lights—which occasionally disappear for nights or weeks—could suggest the hunting pattern of a flock of animals.

Whitcomb lays it out best on page 129 of his book, *Live Pterosaurs in America*, where he argues: UFOs fall flat. No intelligent aliens would fly just above the bushes south of Marfa, Texas, every few weeks or so, for years beyond number; the bushes are not that interesting. The lights do suggest something like giant fireflies, but if giant insects existed they would not dance around in mating rituals every few months throughout the year.

Unfortunately, there are no vintage articles on the orbs that can shed any light on the pterodactyl aspect, but there were documented sightings that date back to 1883. The lights were apparently first seen by a young cowhand, Robert Reed Ellison, who saw a strange, flickering light as he was driving cattle through Paisano Pass. Initially, he wondered if it was perhaps the campfire of Apache Indians. When he inquired about the lights to other local settlers, they said that they too had seen the lights and thought the same thing. However, when they went to investigate the next day they found no evidence of a campsite of any kind. The sightings continued over the years, and the first people to make a concentrated effort to find the source of the lights may have been a group of cowboys herding cattle on the prairie in the summer of 1919. They rode over the mountains to solve the mystery, but like the settlers before them found nothing.

A recent survey by the National UFO Reporting Center deducted that out of all 50 states Texas is the state one is least likely to see a UFO in. On the flip side, Texas is one of the states with a higher frequency of pterosaur and giant bird sightings (as far as those things go, that is). As crazy as it sounds, glowing pterosaurs seem to be a better candidate for the Marfa Lights than extraterrestrial orbs!

Sources:

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----- "Marfa Lights in Texas." Ropens. (August 22, 2013)
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“Snaik Stories”

MORE GLOWING ROPENS?

In this piece, orbs of light similar to the Marfa Lights were seen on July 15, 1878. Like pterodactyls, these lights dived in and out of the water. The article comes to us from the *Colorado Springs Gazette* of July 17, 1878: A Singular Phenomenon A gentleman passing along the Fountain late night before last a short distance above the Half-way house, witnessed a very remarkable phenomenon just across the bridge on the Garden of the Gods road. What seemed to be a very brilliant meteorite rain or shower of falling stars suddenly appeared but a few feet above the surface of the creek dropping into it with a loud splash, and a singular continuous sound resembling the breaking of glass bottles mingled with human cries and ‘swear words.’ The display was of short durations, lasting only a few seconds, but our informant states that it was a most beautiful sight while it lasted. The different colors which appeared were very bright and vivid—the parabolic curve made by reason of its bright stripes, presenting much the appearance of a rainbow.

Such displays are rare in this vicinity. Possibly the one just noted is in a measure due to the present usually heated condition in the atmosphere.



THE TERRIBLE TULLIS SNAKE.

THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

THE REVEREND AND THE DEVIL DINOSAUR

FISHERMAN LOVE TO TELL THE TALE of the one that got away. Usually it's an oversized fish in most cases, but in this story it is a six eyed-lake monster. I know, I thought the whole six-eyed detail knocked any credibility out of this story too. But, even though this was one of the least believable stories in the book I decided to do a little digging. Not only did I discover a preceding article on the monster (it always helps when they're not just a "one-off"), but I also discovered that the main witness, a reverend, was a real individual! I even managed to find another multi-eyed monstrosity from the same time period, not that it helps much in the case of six-eyed monsters.

The first mention of the monster that this author can find comes from the July 21, 1894, *Evening Express*:

A Huge Lake Monster.

IT HAS WHISKERS AND HISSES LOUDLY.

Many People say They Have Seen It and a Clergyman Establishes the Fact.

"Does Thompson's Lake boast of a sea serpent?" This is a question which the people of [sic] Havannah (Illinois) have been asking themselves, and, apparently, it has been answered affirmatively on the excellent testimony of the Rev. A. K. Tullis. Thompson's Lake is a neighbouring fishing and hunting resort, and a huge monster had been seen there repeatedly, according to popular report, it was said that a party of fishermen, young men and ladies had seen this monster several months ago, and that the party thought at first that some huge tree had

fallen into one of the lagoons tributary to the lake. The existence of some huge river serpent in Thompson's Lake is now established beyond all cavil or question, and by the best authority. This reptile was seen one day by the Rev. A. K. Tullis, pastor of the Methodist Church of Lewistown, and his son, Harry, who were boating on the lake. In company with his son the Rev. Mr. Tullis was fishing. Their skiff was anchored about a half-mile south east of the boat landing, near the Prickett houses. At a distance of less than 200ft., among the flags and lilies Mr. Tullis first caught sight of the hideous creature's head as it rose high in the air. The head was flat, with a sort-of whisker or fin-like appendage on either side, and the eyes were large. From a cruel-looking mouth a forked tongue shot out and hisses could be distinctly heard. Mr. Tullis says he cannot adequately describe the monster, but is satisfied that its neck was as large around as his arm, or larger, and he has no means of knowing how long the reptile is. The creature seemed to be tangled in a mass of moss at the time, for it threshed the water into a foam of 100ft. around, and, as it did so exposed portions of its body, which gave the impression that, it must be several feet in circumference, although at the neck it was not much larger than a good-sized man's fleshy arm. During this time Harry Tullis fell out of the boat, and, in rescuing him so much commotion was made in the water that the reptile became quiet, or moved to another part of the lake. It was seen, again, however, before the party returned to shore. The Rev. Tullis does not pretend to give a sensational description of the monster. He says that there can be no doubt, that it is a huge reptile of some sort, and is not certain but it is a reptile, something on the order of the prehistoric animals whose huge remains are occasionally found in some of the older deposits in river valleys. This creature has been seen before this by others fishing in Thompson's Lake. Little attention was paid to the stories told of the hideous thing until the Rev. Mr. Tullis verified them. One farmer saw the snake tearing through his cornfield recently, leaving a swath dozens of feet wide. Some field of grain has been ruined by the monster. A party of cool and determined men is being organized to capture the animal and ascertain to what order of reptile it belongs. There is little doubt that a much-mooted question has finally been settled.

This even more fantastic second article continues the saga of the monster, where it is captured in a barn and escapes back into the river. Then, several area men try to capture it with a reinforced fishing net. If you read carefully, you will notice the details of the monster are a bit fiercer here than in Reverend Tullis's version. This is where the "six eyes" are glimpsed and the monster's size is amped up to fifty feet in length.

The South Bend Tribune

10 Aug 1894,

MR. TULLIS' SERPENT.

It Will Probably Spend the Summer in Illinois.

Futile Efforts to Hold the Monster in a Fishing Scene—It has Six Eyes Four Stubby Web Feet and Wears Fierce Whiskers.

The residents of Havana, Il., as well as at Lewistown,^[112] some miles above there, have been terrified by deep bellowing and screaming hisses that have come from the vicinity of Thompson's lake for several days. These sounds come from the very depths of the lake, and then again from the thickets of a cornfield a mile or two distant from the edge of the lake. As nothing has been seen lately of the huge serpent discovered by Rev. Mr. Tullis, of Lewistown, it was thought that the monster had come out into the river and was in the Crooked creek country, of McDonough and Hancock counties, as the report reached here that a huge snake had been caught in a trap near Plymouth, had demolished the barn in which the trap was set and had escaped with the trap. The sounds brought crowds from both Lewistown and Havana, and at last the great monster was sighted in the stream. It disappeared immediately and did not appear again. The Lewistown crowd returned home, only to learn that the great monster had again been seen and that an attempt would be made to capture it with a great river seine.

Among the Lewistown people who started back were: Superintendent Atherton, of the Narrow Gauge road; Hon. H. W. Masters, Dr. Maguire, L. C. Breedon, of the Lewistown News, and others. They, however, gave up the chase before reaching the lake.

Twice did the intrepid Havana fishermen catch this monster reptile in the meshes of the big river seine that has been known to hold great catfish and river sharks without breaking a mesh. At first the men hoped they had captured the terror of Thompson's lake. But with a

great struggle, accompanied with bellowing and hisses awful to hear, the hideous monster broke through the meshes. As it sank out of sight it turned partially on its back, and then exposed the four stubby web feet with which it wobbles on land when in search of animal food which it is known to devour, as the loss of pigs and other farm animals by farmers hereabouts will amply testify.

The loss of the monster only angered the men, and they resolved to capture the beast or reptile or whatever it was, if such a thing could be accomplished. The net was mended and reinforced with stronger meshes in places where the others were torn. Suddenly, as the men were about to make the drag, the entire lake seemed to be one mass of foam, and from the midst of it arose the head of the monster. One of the weakest hearted of the men, not expecting so horrible a sight, fainted. The head was hooded with a great hood of skin that lay back in coils from the serpent's head. The head itself was as big as a bushel basket, and from it glared six hideous eyes that glittered cruelly. From a hideous mouth protruded a venomous tongue, forked, and two immense tusks also protruded from the jaws of the monster. On each side of this hideous head were long masses of hair. The brute rose high enough in the air to exhibit two of its ugly feet, and as it clawed the air with them it emitted those frightful bellowings that have terrified the people. Between intervals of bellowing the great monster would hiss and scream frightfully. The length of this great snake is said to be at least fifty feet and the body as big around as a barrel. The Havana fishermen, however were undaunted, and made a second cast with the net. Then the fun began. As the meshes closed around the great serpent the hot air became hideous with the bellowings, hisses and screams of this half-fish, half-brute thing. Feeling that it had again been enmeshed the monster roared terribly, and with a mighty effort tore the net into shreds and dived again to the inky bottom. A few shots were fired at the creature, but the bullets had no effect on the thick hide of the monster.

Thus ends the account of the monster, and to the best of my knowledge it was never seen again. To analyze the case, for starters, though Reverend Tullis theorized that the monster was some sort of prehistoric survivor, it resembles no known variety of dinosaur. It comes closest to resembling a plesiosaur, albeit with a cobra-like hood and six eyes. The four "stubby web

feet” could very well be flippers similar to a plesiosaur’s. The tufts of hair are not unusual for lake monsters, by the way, many of them are reported with that same, odd detail. But, the six eyes...

I can find only two other six-eyed lake monsters. The first Noe Torres and I included in our book *The Real Cowboys and Aliens* as a USO (Unidentified Submersible Object). Though the creature was animal-like in its description, many other attributes it had (such as delivering electric shocks to those around it) made it seem more like a craft mistaken for an animal (similar to the *Nautilus* submarine in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*). This creature was sighted in 1893, a year before this story broke. It occurred in Tacoma, Washington, where several men on a fishing trip spotted a 150 foot long creature emitting electricity from two horns atop its six eyed head. Overall, it looked like a caterpillar in terms of its body structure. If the Tullis serpent article was a hoax, perhaps the writer could have drawn inspiration from this story?

Then there is another six eyed monster also sighted in 1893 coming to us courtesy of the *Jeffersonville National Democrat* from August 11, 1893:

LATEST SNAKE STORY

Was it a snake, a seahorse, a centaur, a satyr or some indiscernible and hideous monster?

On Saturday Mr. Lewman was driving his milk wagon from Utica to Louisville, and when a short distance east of Langasang, some curious noise in the rear of the wagon attracted his attention. He bristled with horror. His head must have looked like a porcupine. Those peeped up behind the milk can a monster of hideous mien that was a cross between a hyena devil and snake. It had six glaring eyes set in a gleaming circle on each side of its head, 12 in all, a single horn in the center and two powerful tusks on each side.

Lewman gave the alarm. Will Hobson, Jeff Brendel and Jarvis Howes were in the rear, and the party consulted a moment before attacking the mysterious occupant of the wagon, and were instantly horrified to see the repulsive, writhing thing, move his shiny, black, carcass over the seat of the wagon, down the wagon seat onto the [sic] donble trees, then onto the ground. They were almost paralyzed with astonishment to see a monster over 6 inches in diameter and stretching

along the road 27 feet. His back had a ridge of spurs, while on the stomach was a series of legs which appeared like the thousand leggers.

Lewman and his party were sure they would kill and capture the monstrosity, because there was a high picket fence on the road which was too close to let the appalling reptile through and were in hot pursuit, when the repulsive visitor turned its head toward the fence and placing his tusk as a crowbar or lever, wrenched the palings off, and in an instant was through the fence, disappearing in the deep grass. The party continued for a half hour in search of the strange monster but could not find it.

When Lewman returned to his milk wagon, he was astonished to find one 10 gallon can with the lid off and the milk gone. ^[113]

This terrible hybrid is believed to be in the same locality yet, and there are talks of organizing parties to catch and kill it.

There is one other monster that resembles the Tullis Serpent. It was essentially a giant sea cobra sighted the same year, 1894, in Alaska. The story ran in the *Juneau City Mining Record* on June 25th and told of two men who encountered a cobra-like sea serpent.

While it's difficult to prove whether or not the monster was real, as I said earlier, the good Reverend Tullis was at least a real man. I found mention of him in an article dated January 28, 1893, from the *Epworth Herald* which details Reverend A.K. Tullis of Lewiston growing his church. I also found this mention of the Reverend in *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume 64, "Sunday was a great day. The love feast led by the Rev. A. K. Tullis and Dr. R. A. Brown was an occasion of spiritual uplift."

Judge H.K. Masters also existed, and the book *The Bench and Bar of Illinois* called him a "leading lawyer and orator." If the story was a hoax, then how did these honorable men feel about their involvement in it?

Today the incident is largely forgotten, nor does Thompson's Lake promote itself as the home of a monster. A Facebook page devoted to the Lewiston Narrow Gauge Depot reposted the old article and joked, "Could this have led to the demise of the Narrow Gauge Railroad? Were they afraid the Terrible Tullis [Serpent] would Trample the Train?"

Unlike mainstay lake monsters such as Nessie and Champ, it seems that the Tullis serpent either died sometime after the sightings, moved elsewhere, or was non-existent to begin with.

Sources:

Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume 64. (1915)

Palmer, John McAuley. *The Bench and Bar of Illinois: Historical and Reminiscent*, Volume 2. Illinois: Lewis Publishing Company, 1899.



Goes Ahead, Crow Medicine Man c.1910.

THE MEDICINE MAN AND THE MEGANEURA

PREHISTORIC VISION QUEST

THE PREHISTORIC AGE was not only inhabited by giant reptiles but a few giant bugs as well. Meganeura were essentially giant dragonflies with wingspans that could reach up to over two feet long. Specifically, they lived 300 million years ago during the Carboniferous period. To the best of my knowledge, there are no Meganeura-like cryptids sighted in the world today. However, a medicine man in the 19th Century may have found one alive...

His name was Goes Ahead. He was famous as a Crow scout for George Armstrong Custer's 7th Cavalry and was also a survivor of the Battle of the Little Big Horn in 1876. As such, his accounts of the battle were and are greatly valued by modern historians.

The Battle of Little Big Horn, which occurred in southeastern Montana Territory, is perhaps better known as Custer's Last Stand since Custer died during the battle and the 7th Cavalry lost. The 7th Cavalry's enemy that day (actually two days, June 25–26) was the combined forces of the Lakota, Northern Cheyenne, and Arapaho tribes.



"The Custer Fight" by Charles Marion Russel c.1903.

Though obviously a historically significant battle as it is, what if I told you that during the battle Goes Ahead carried in his satchel a very special artifact? Six years earlier, in 1870, at the age of 20 Goes Ahead went on a vision quest in the Wolf Mountains. While fasting he observed a very strange creature unlike anything he had ever seen before.

At first he thought it was a bird that was having trouble flying. He said, or rather those that recounted the story for him later, that the creature's body looked too heavy for its own wings, of which there were four. The creature, which was described as "serpentine", fell dead at his feet. But it was not a serpent,^[114] nor was it a bird, it resembled a dragonfly. Goes Ahead took the creature to be part of his vision quest, and preserved its body as his main source of medicine, encasing it in beadwork.

Goes Ahead took the strange, mummified creature with him everywhere—including Custer's Last Stand. On that fateful day Goes Ahead was not only smart (he said he knew Custard would lose), he was also brave and rode into battle anyways. Miraculously, he was among those to survive.

After the battle, Goes Ahead went to Squaw Butte, a pine-covered ridge, and climbed a tree. High in the treetops he carved his mark: an image of the strange creature he carried with him always. Nearly one hundred years later,

in 1973, historian William Boyes went to the battlefield with Alma Snell, Goes Ahead's granddaughter.

Boyes found the tree, climbed it, and found the mark. Boyes described the work as "a careful carving about 15 to 18 inches long that must have taken hours to make."^[115] Boyes compared it to both a winged serpent and a dragonfly. And indeed, a sketch he made of the carving looks very much like a dragonfly. Even the dimensions that Goes Ahead gave it are about to scale with a *Meganeura*. Interestingly, Boye had no preconceived notion of what he would find when he climbed the tree in 1973. Alma didn't tell him what the carving was of, therefore when he saw it, it was his own opinion that it was like a dragonfly, she hadn't put the notion in his head.

It's important to note that Goes Ahead wasn't the only medicine man to see these creatures. Adrienne Mayor knew of two others. One was Chief Medicine Crow who once drew a "snake with wings" in 1880. In more recent years, Mayor met a Native American artist, Wayne George, who told her that while on a vision quest he observed dinosaurs and also a *Meganeura*.

However, unlike the other two men, Goes Ahead actually had the body of the creature. And where is it today you ask? Unfortunately, Goes Ahead threw it into the Little Bighorn River in 1900. The occasion was his baptism, and feeling it was a pagan object, either he himself or someone there discarded it, never to be found again. Goes Ahead would pass on 19 years later and was buried in the military cemetery at the Little Big Horn Battlefield.

Sources:

Mayor, Adrienne. *Fossil Legends of the First Americans*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005.

TERRIBLE LIZARD

THE MYSTERIOUS “OSSIFYING” MONSTER

THIS ARTICLE begins encouragingly with the title of “Another Fake”. Instead of titling this chapter “Another Fake”, I thought it perhaps more interesting to entitle it “Terrible Lizard”—for it truly was a terrible lizard. It probably also wasn’t real, but it’s a darned interesting story and unlike anything else I came across while researching this book. Though in all likelihood the creature is simply the invention of a newspaper writer’s imagination I like to think of it as a strange, surviving Tetrapod from the Carboniferous period. With no further ado, here is the article from the October 23, 1897, *Logansport Saturday Pharos*.

ANOTHER FAKE

**Telegraph Wires Are Becoming
Numerous in Indiana**

**A Strange Reptile Alleged to Have Been Captured Near
Logansport**

The following telegram was sent out from Frankfort last Saturday: “For many years George Blinn, a wealthy farmer living near the city, has been engaged in making one of the finest parks and collecting specimens for one of the largest zoological gardens and museums in the United States. For years traditions have told of a strange reptile inhabiting a cave near Logansport.^[116] A month ago it was captured and put in Mr. Blinn’s Park.

“From the under part of the dog-like head and its alligator-like body there exudes a shiny paste. The traditions have said that this substance

slowly ossified^[117] any article with which it came in contact. In making the capture two of the men got a small quantity of it on their hands. The next day their hands became insensible to pain and then gradually took on the appearance of bone. Now their hands and arms are perfectly ossified as far as their elbow joints.

“When liberated in the park the dog, alligator or whatever it may be, went on a wild rampage. It climbed up small trees by the score, sprang upon the back of Mr. Blinn’s favorite bear and tried to climb out over the high steel screen fence surrounding the park. It finally disappeared in a den that had been prepared for it and has not been seen since. But its work has been done. In the month a great transformation scene is taken place at the park. The trees are skeletons of bone, the big bear is a magnificent piece of statuary, while the fence is slowly but surely being ossified. Vast crowds of people view the scene daily and scientists are mystified at the strange phenomena. A few of the bones have disappeared.”

To begin our examination of this far-out tale, some salamanders can secrete poison through their skin, but usually it’s only harmful if ingested. However, this creature’s gift for destruction is so extreme that this is likely just another “Snaik Story”. Or, what if it was some form of large, prehistoric salamander that’s skin had a higher potency for toxins? This possibility aside, I should mention that I could find no records of this alleged zoo, nor its proprietor George Bliss.

“Snake Stories”

EVERYTHING’S BIGGER IN TEXAS

This story, entitled “IT SWALLOWED THE MAN”, is taken from the *Davenport Morning Tribune* of August 17, 1889. It concerns a Frenchman living in Gainesville, Texas, who unearths two mysterious skeletons while sinking his well...

After reaching a depth of 4 feet, and while in a formation of limestone gravel that had continued almost uninterruptedly from the surface down, Mr. Sommes came upon the vertebra and ribs of an animal. The ribs were about the size of a small pig’s and rapidly tapered. Carefully unearthing the bones toward the tapering end, Mr. Sommes came to the rattles, which, when counted, numbered 17, the largest measuring 6 inches across. Attracted by the strange find, the neighbors gathered in, and the work of unearthing the monster was prosecuted with vigor. After laying bare 19 feet of the remains of the monster of other times, imagine their consternation at finding the entire skeleton of a man of tremendous stature in the stomach of the skeleton of the snake. The remains of the man and as far as the serpent has been exhumed, are as perfect as when first denuded of the flesh, and were doubtless covered by lime and gravel soon after death. Near the bones of the man’s right hand is a rude stone hatchet, which a local geologist of some repute reports to be similar to the handiwork of Paleolithic man.

THE DINOSAUR'S GHOST

BEASTS OF THE BADLANDS

NO WESTERN BOOK would be complete with at least one ghost story. I had hoped some cowpoke had either seen or made up a story about a ghost dinosaur. But, alas, my searches turned up no such stories. But then Native American Legend came to my rescue. As it is, many tribes of Native Americans revered and feared dinosaur bones as though they possessed some mysterious, terrifying power.

Most tales of deadly dinosaur bones come courtesy of the South Dakota Badlands. Though Native American tribes had been finding mysterious, giant bones for years, they weren't discovered by settlers until the 1840s. During that decade many trappers traversed the badlands on their way to or from either Fort Pierre or Fort Laramie. The first widely publicized find was in 1843 by Alexander Culbertson of the American Fur Company. He sent his find, later identified as the jawbone of a *Paleotherium*, to Dr. Hiram A. Prout. Years later, in 1846, Prout published his findings which incited the White River Badlands to become a very popular hunting ground for fossils. This tradition carries on even to this day.

The Native Americans of the area, however, believed that the fossils should be left undisturbed. In 1906, the ethnologist James Owen Dorsey gathered tales of "enormous serpents" from the Lakota tribe. The Lakota believed that the bones of these enormous serpents could strike a person blind, dead or crazy. They were not something to meddle with.

On the other hand, some medicine men used fossils for medicine and magic. However, there was a catch. To use the fossil, they believed it should

be found sticking out of the ground. But, if you dug deep into the ground to remove a fossil you violated the integrity of the earth.

Some bones of the Badlands were exhumed purely for harmful purposes. These tales were unearthed by Sebastian “Bronco” LeBeau, a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux tribe as he studied the Agate Springs Fossil Beds. Legend had it that at a spot called Carnegie Hill, a mythical figure called *Gnaski* ^[118] hid behind the hill as he watched a tribe of the “First People” walk by. *Gnaski* grabbed a dinosaur bone and “magically projected it” into the body of a young man within the tribe.

Later, the young man began to behave as though possessed, acting violent and erratic. The tribe medicine man, Wata, figured out what was going on and removed the splinter of prehistoric bone from his body and the young man was cured. From that day forward Wata warned his people against the evil fossil magic that could be accomplished through the “stinging ceremony”. The tribe also avoided Carnegie Hill.

The belief that the Badlands were not a location to be taken lightly carried over into the 21st Century. Researcher Adrienne Mayor met one Eldon Little Moon who told her that, “most people won’t travel in the Badlands at night. They say there are some strange animals, like none you see anywhere else, maybe still alive from dinosaur days. Snakes as big as telephone poles. Sometimes you see them at night going across the road.”^[119]

Speaking of strange things crossing the road, a South Dakota farmer claimed to have seen something resembling either a plesiosaurus or an Apatosaurus cross the road in front of his tractor in broad daylight in 1934. Long before that, South Dakota residents also told tales of a serpentine monster in Devil’s Lake. So, even aside from the spectral creatures of the Badlands, South Dakota seems to be crawling with giant serpents and saurians.

Sources:

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Offutt, Jason. “Exploring American Monsters: South Dakota.” *Mysterious Universe* (September 26, 2016). <https://mysteriousuniverse.org/2016/09/exploring-american-monsters-south-dakota/>

RETURN OF THE TOMBSTONE PTERODACTYL

STANSBURY ISLAND'S TALE OF TERROR

SINCE WE BEGAN our journey with the Pterodactyl of Tombstone, the following seemed an appropriate chapter to close this book on. This article, from the *Salt Lake Telegram* from July 30, 1903, is enough to make one wonder if the aforementioned Pterodactyl survived its reported 1890 death to make its way elsewhere. Either that or maybe the authors of this article were inspired by that story to write a “sequel” to it. The description of the monster is remarkably similar: a flying crocodile with a 100-foot wingspan. Also eyebrow-raising is the fact that this story took place three weeks before the Van Meter Monster incident, also thought to involve pterodactyls. Like those glowing monsters, the flying monster in this tale also glowed at different points...

Thursday, July 30, 1903, MONSTER THAT SWIMS AND FLIES IS SIGHTED ON STANSBURY ISLAND SHORES

WHAT MONSTER IS SAID TO LOOK LIKE

HEAD: Like an alligator's, nearly fifteen feet in length.

MOUTH: Armed with immense serrated teeth, opening wide enough to admit a horse.

BODY: Presumably scaly, but so encrusted with salt that it cannot be seen.

EYES: Very large, round and burning with a bright red light.

WINGS: Bat-like, spreading probably 100 feet from tip to tip.

**Hunters Tell a Wild and Woolly Story of Beast That Wears an
Armor of Crystal Salt.**

A terrible, nameless, unclassified creature of the animal world is exciting the curiosity, wonder and fear of occasional visitors to Stansbury island, in the southern portion of Great Salt lake.

This monster, for it can be called nothing else, so strange and unnatural is it in appearance, has lately, it is said, been seen by several persons, but the best account of its characteristics and movements is given by Martin Gilbert and John Barry, two hunters who this week returned from an expedition over the island. In the course of which they studied the habits of this hitherto unheard-of creature for three days.

The story of the two hunters which reads like a fairy story is given for what it is worth.

At Home in Air and Sea.

The monster, which appears to be almost equally at home in the air and on the beach, or submerged in the briny waters of Salt Lake, is probably the sole survivor of a prehistoric species. It is doubtless the last representative of a family whose other members, dead ages since, have left the testimony of their existence in the primeval rocks of the mountains.

Arranging in concise form the description of this incredible relic of the animal world, from the accounts given by those who have observed it at close range, it seems in plain, unscientific language, a combination of fish, alligator and bat.

Description of the Beast.

In size it is simply tremendous. Gilbert places its length as fifty feet, while Barry, who is an amateur scientist, says that an examination of its tracks demonstrates that the monster must be at least sixty-five feet from head to tail.

The head is like that of an alligator, the eyes fiercely glowing, the jaws, capable of opening to a distance of ten feet from the top of the upper to the lower, are provided with a fearful array of sharp saw-edged teeth, the body, so far as observation goes, is incased with heavy horny scales. As to this Gilbert and Barry are not positive, as the constant diving of the beast, if such it may be called, into the strong brine of the lake has encrusted it with a thick coating of salt, which save near the wings completely hide the body.

Hunters Tell the Story

It is due to this unusual phenomenon that the hunters obtained their first sight of the monster. According to their account they first sighted it at a distance of between one and a half and two miles. The day was clear, the sun intensely bright. Gilbert's own words of the discovery are:

"We were walking westward from the east shore of the island about nine in the morning, when suddenly to the northwest there appeared a Thing. I don't know what to call it; it looked to me like a brilliant rainbow folded into a compact mass, moving rapidly through the air.

"I was so astounded that for a few moments I doubted the evidence of my own senses. The object came nearer, but the colors were so dazzling that it was some time before it assumed definite form. No one who has not witnessed the sight can conceive its strangeness. The mass of color was glowing, flaming, radiant. I spoke to Barry, saying:

Both Were Badly Scared

'For God's sake, man, can you see that?' and he was no less astonished than myself.

"In three or four minutes the monster's position was such that it no longer reflected the sunlight directly toward us and we could then discern the outline of the form. Its wings were batlike, stretching out over a great expanse. I should say at least 100 feet from tip to tip. The tail was proportionately short and resembled that of a huge fish. We were not close enough at this time to tell much about the head, only we saw that the jaws were very long. In shape the head was like that of a crocodile."

They Watched the Monster

Gilbert gave a long account of how he and Barry watched the monster, which supported its enormous wings, swung round and round in immense circles through the air, gradually descending and approaching nearer to them. He declares that it was not more than 300 yards above their heads, when, now convinced that the awful creature was about to attack them, he fired at the monster with his rifle, a 44-caliber gun loaded with a steel-cased bullet.

The missile, he believes, struck fair, but inflicted no apparent wound. The monster gave utterance to a strange, fear-inspiring cry, half snort,

half roar, and rising rapidly in the air, veered quickly to the west, and after three miles of flight settled down and disappeared beyond the crest of the hills.

Bullet Had No Effect

A few seconds after the shot was fired, while the hunters were watching the flight of the dragon-like beast, some small lumps of salt fell almost at their feet. They were more than ever mystified by this, but not until the next day were they able to ascertain its source.

Determined to learn more of the monster, Gilbert and Barry hastened in the direction of its flight and after surmounting the range of hills to the westward, found with little trouble the tracks the beast had left in the soil after ceasing its flight. These led the hunters to an immense cave, near the head of a narrow gulch.

They approached to within, three rods of the opening in the rocks, but finding that the freshest footprints led into the gloomy cavern feared at that time to make any closer inspection.

Track Like Gigantic Hand

“These tracks,” says Barry, “were five-toed, ^[120] almost exactly like the imprint of a gigantic hand, if you can imagine a hand nearly four feet across the palm.”

Gilbert and Barry talked over the situation at length. Both realized that not even blind and desperate courage would justify them in attempting to attack the monster in its lair. They constructed a barricade for themselves of the largest rocks they were able to handle and lay down to await results.

The day wore on and the men were weary and almost despairing of success in their vigil, when, just at dusk, the horrible creature crawled slowly from the cave and pausing at its mouth to take flight, gave them their first view at close range.

Made Blood Run Cold

Barry says that the hackneyed phrase of exaggeration, “made his blood run cold,” is none too strong for the sight they saw.

“The monster slowly opened his great jaws,” declared the hunter. In speaking of his expedience, until it seemed as if he could have swallowed a large horse at one mouthful. He gave a snort that might

have been heard a mile, and then slowly spread his huge wings. We now saw that the huge body was coated with salt, apparently nearly a foot in thickness. This explained why the salt lumps dropped at our feet, when the bullet struck the monster. By this we knew that the creature must spend much of its time in the waters of the lake.

“The great beast made a short run before taking flight, taking long jumps upon its hind legs and tail. The forelegs were comparatively short and appeared to be used only when it crawled flat upon the ground.

Approached the Hunters

“The frightful head was not more than ten feet from us when it rose in the air, but so well were we screened by our shelter of rocks that we were unobserved. The large, fiercely gleaming eyes, the sharp serrated teeth, the wide expanse of wings that began to move rapidly as the horrible beast rose from the ground and passed directly over our heads, combined to make a terrible sight, one that I shall never forget.

“We watched it disappear in the gathering gloom of night, but were for a long time paralyzed with fear, not knowing when it might return. It was probably an hour later when it did come back.

“We heard the swish of the mighty wings before it could be seen, but as it drew nearer, by the light of the young moon in the west, we saw what it carried in its great jaws was a large horse, which I suppose it had swooped down upon while feeding. The horse was badly crushed and mangled.



Feasted on the Horse

“The monster carried its burden into the cave and we could hear the crunching of its jaws and the cracking of the horse’s bones as the beast devoured its victim. After an hour or so all was still and we then slipped quietly away in the darkness and returned to our camp on the eastern shore of the Island.

“Had it not been for a bad break in our boat we would have fled the island that night, as it was we worked all night to repair the craft, although the task might have been accomplished

in two hours except that we feared to build a fire to afford light.”

“It was just dawn and we were preparing to launch when Gilbert said: ‘There it comes again!’ In an instant we turned the boat bottom up and crawled under it. One end was lifted about a foot above the sand by and rook and we were able to watch the monster’s actions.

“It settled down on the beach less than fifty yards to the north and dived quickly into the lake. From its actions while nearly buried under the waves I judged that the creature was gathering and feeding upon the salt water shrimps which abound along the coast there. When the monster came up, it was very close to us, and we were particularly impressed with the fact that the strong brine had no effect upon its eyes, which appeared lidless. Evidently the animal’s food in the water was found by the sense of sight.

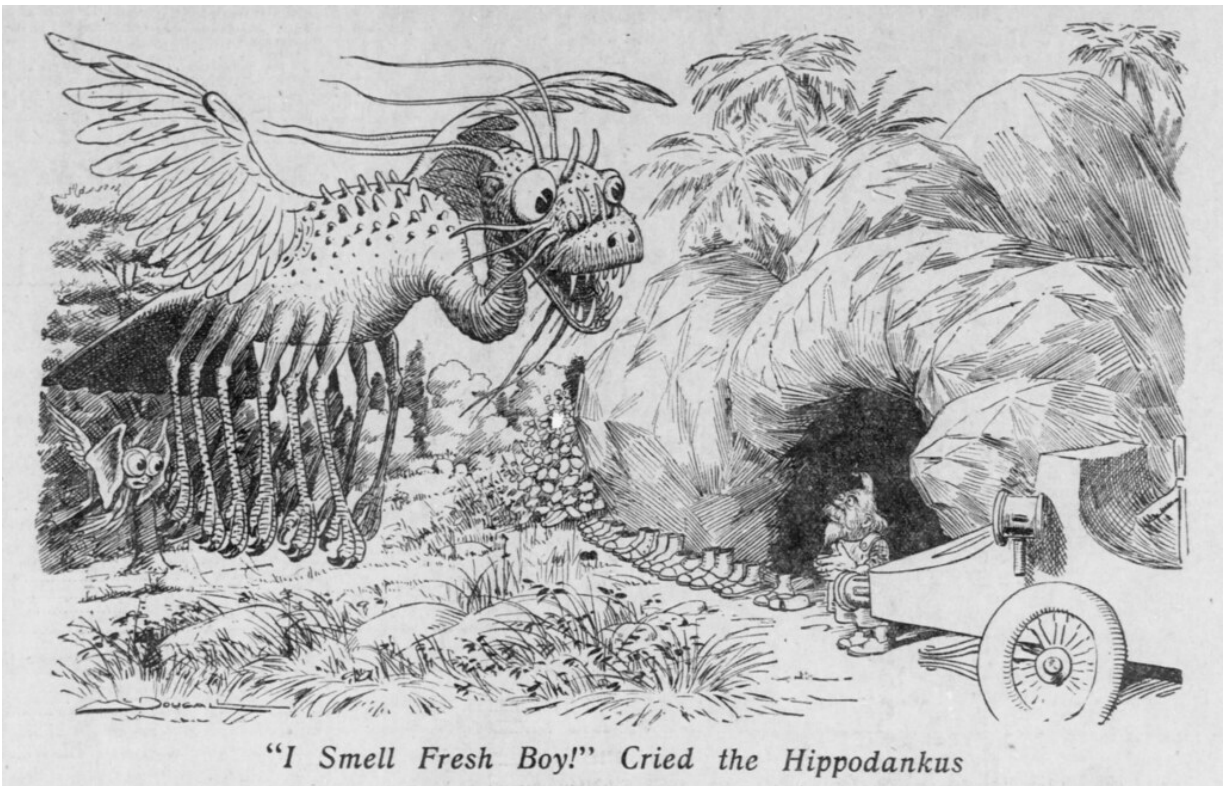
“Although of such gigantic size, there was nothing sluggish in the movements of the monster. It swam and dived as rapidly as any large fish.

“We watched it for perhaps half an hour, as it gradually worked its way northward and finally disappeared.”

Though they printed the above story with a certain level of sincerity, the very next day the *Herald Newspaper* reported on August 1st that,

The monster the two hunters described carried enough salt encrusted on its body for every person who read their tale to have accepted the story with several grains of salt. However, the impression that one of the imaginative nimrods is none other than Walt McDougall, who writes strange animal stories and draws wonderful pictures for the children, is growing daily.—Editor the Telegram.

Though the monster may not be real, McDougall certainly was. In fact, he invented the concept of political cartoons, publishing the very first one ever on August 10, 1884. Later that year his cartoons even influenced the presidential race between James G. Blaine and Grover Cleveland. McDougall also dabbled in fantasy, illustrating L. Frank Baum’s *Queer Visitors from the Marvelous Land of Oz* (1904–1905). Before that he authored his own books, *The Hidden City* (1891) and *Comic Animals* (1890), a storybook. The year of the sighting he authored *The Rambillicus Book* (1903).



One of McDougall's monsters c.1903.

Though it's likely the monster was indeed a creation of McDougall, we shall still extend it the courtesy of an investigation. For starters, because the story took place a short time before the Van Meter incident, researcher Chad Lewis took the time to research the case and drew some interesting parallels. For instance, this beast's body glowed at certain moments just like the Van Meter monster's. It also sought out a cave as a lair.

Lewis, in his Van Meter Monster book, writes, “1903 or not, there were documented sightings of creatures in and around the lake in 1877 and three decades prior to that. Looking even further back into the oral traditions of the native peoples of the area reveals the Giant Mosquito Monster.”

And indeed, the “Giant Mosquito Monster” was a real legend from the area also known as “The Great Mosquito”. It was said to suck the blood from its victims and it was blamed for the death of many Native Americans in the area. In his article “The Great Mysteries of the Great Salt Lake” for Mysterious Universe, author Brent Swancer wrote that “Giant winged creatures had long been occasionally reported around Great Salt Lake, but

the most well-publicized came in 1903..." This implies there were more flying monsters in the area other than the "Great Mosquito" and the 1903 pterodactyl. On that note, it's worth mentioning that in 1894, a 100-foot long serpent was seen flying over Eden, Utah in Weber County according to the *Ogden Standard-Examiner*.

The story ran on July 23rd with the title of "A veritable Eden. The serpent is at his old tricks again". The story said that around sundown, "a number of Eden's reliable men" claimed to have seen a "monster serpent," measuring 100 feet long and 18 inches in diameter. This creature was presumably of the flying snake variety, so if it was in line with a pterodactyl is debatable. It was said to fly at a speed of around 35-40 miles per hour and swooped down near Wilbur's Store, at the corner of Independence Park. It was never seen again.

As to 1877 monster sightings, these referred to sea monsters and were likely whales. You see, astounding as it may sound, in 1873 a whale farmer named James Wickham intended to stock the Great Salt Lake with whales! Though many efforts to introduce non-native species to the lake failed, Wickham was confident whales could survive in the saltwater there. Supposedly Wickham spent a whole year in Australia capturing whales in a ship built specifically to haul the whales in! He was successful in catching two 35 foot long Australian whales which were brought to Utah and kept in a special pen located at the mouth of the Bear River. The whales escaped and were assumed dead for six months until they were eventually spotted swimming in the Great Salt Lake with offspring! The whales were then hunted to extinction, or so the story goes.

Of course, whales are not really monsters. A true monster was spotted in 1871 by a Mr. J.H. McNeil and several other members of the Barnes Salt Works Company. The men claimed to have seen a huge monster with the body of an alligator and the head of a horse! Before you judge too harshly based on the description, remember that many lake monsters across the world have been described as having horse-like heads. Specifically, they saw it at Monument Point on the northern shores of the Great Salt Lake. The men went so far as to claim that after letting out a deep bellowing roar that it chased them up a hill. There they stayed hidden until daylight the next morning. When they returned to the spot where they sighted the monster they found overturned boulders, torn ground and monster tracks.

From that point forward, sightings of monster alligators (ranging from 5 to 75 feet long) have been seen in the lake.

While the crocodile monsters^[121] seen within the lake aren't out of the realm of credibility, the flying crocodile monster sighted in 1903 is more dubious. Though pterodactyls are among the more common remnant dinosaur sightings, the story delivered by Martin Gilbert and John Barry seems a bit too good to be true. Couple this with the fact that the *Herald Newspaper* itself claimed that the story was the invention of Walt McDougall, and it would sadly seem that this story is a hoax.

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POSTSCRIPT

THE REAL LIFE VALLEY OF GWANGI: A LOST WORLD IN THE GRAND CANYON?

DON'T GET TOO EXCITED. I know some of you see this chapter title and think it's going to involve real cowboys roping a real Allosaurus. It's not. But you are correct in assuming it's related to the classic *Valley of Gwangi* movie from 1969. Fans of the film will recall that it doesn't begin with dinosaurs, but a much smaller prehistoric creature that sets off the mystery. In the movie, a small prehistoric equine is discovered and put on display in a circus. This prompts an expedition into a valley to collect more strange creatures. There the cowpokes eventually capture Gwangi, a large Allosaurus. As strange as it sounds, this also allegedly happened in real life...the search for a tiny horse that is, not roping the Allosaurus.

First off, let's explain just what we're talking about. The *eohippus*, or the Dawn Horse, was basically a small "pygmy horse" that was supposed to have gone extinct 35 million years ago. If this was the case, why then did so many circuses in the 1930s claim to display pygmy horses? A newsletter from the Grand Canyon Pioneers Society in 1990 included a recollection of a man who had seen an ad for the pygmy horses at a fair in Elkhorn, Wisconsin. To his recollection the sign read, "Come see the Pygmy Horses from the Lost Mesa in the Grand Canyon: Only 25 cents".^[122] Sadly this man decided to spend his last quarter elsewhere and was therefore unable to tell readers if there really were any pygmy horses inside.^[123]



Eohippus by Charles Knight c.1904.

Word of this eventually reached the ears of the American Museum of Natural History and by 1937 they launched an investigation to determine if these horses were real, and if so, where did they come from? Because many of the circuses sprang from Arizona, they decided that the Grand Canyon area was where to look. Like Arthur Conan Doyle's *Lost World*, they wondered if an isolated mesa within the canyon might be the place to look. A plateau called Shiva Temple was decided upon as a candidate. With steep walls topped by a forest, this environment seemed perfect to hide a prehistoric species that somehow survived into the 20th Century. Word of the American Museum of Natural History's expedition reached the ears of Emory Kolb, the famous Grand Canyon photographer, who offered his services to the expedition. Considering Kolb to be too old—he was in his mid-fifties—and lacking in knowledge regarding paleontology, they turned down his services! Rightfully incensed, Kolb decided to mount his own expedition to Shiva Temple.

Within less than a week Kolb had climbed up Shiva Mesa and found no evidence of pygmy horses. To spite the museum's expedition, he deliberately left behind a wrapper for his Eastman Kodak film so that they would see evidence that they were not the first party to land on the mesa!

The next year, National Park Service rangers of the Grand Canyon mounted their own expedition to try and sort out the truth of the horses. Rather than a prehistoric race, they felt that perhaps these dwarf horses were the offspring of horses that were isolated in a canyon blocked by a slide. The "Little Horse Trip", as it was called, was led by Bert Lauzon. The expedition rode from Cataract Canyon to Carbonate Canyon, hiked up to Sinyala Mesa and then went northeast to the Great Thumb Mesa.

Here is an extract from Lauzon's diary:

Jan. 18 (1938) Big Jim was head Councilman and Clark Jack was interpreter. When we explained that we were out to get facts on the little horse proposition the Indians [Havasupais] gladly gave us what information they could and then told us about three little sand rock horses that were in Pachadacobas pasture at this time.

[The smallest measured 48 inches at the shoulder, 53 inches girth, and 67 inches from ears to tail and they estimated the horse to be about 11 years old and close to 300 pounds].

Our Indian visitors explained thru their interpreter that these sand rock horses are descendants of horses that their great Grandfathers ranged in these canyons years and years ago.

The Indians told us that these horses range up the main Cataract Canyon for 30 miles, west on the sand rocks in Grand Canyon to Mohawk Canyon and East to the Big Thumb in Grand Canyon.^[124]

Upon returning to his office ten days later, Lauzon wrote that, "It has been reported that under the Great Thumb in the section of the canyon where we now are, that horses 24 inches in height were ranging on the sand rocks but we saw nothing of that size except two last season colts."^[125]

The official report compiled by naturalist Edwin McKee summarized that:

- 1.

The size of the horses of this area has been greatly reduced in statements given out concerning the area.

2.

The canyon blocked off by landslides in which pygmy horses are supposed to have evolved is a myth.

3.

The small horses of the area are the normal results of the environment and are not confined to any one limited area or physical barriers.^[126]

By the early 1940s, the pygmy horses of the Grand Canyon were finally confirmed, though the *eohippus* they were not.

FAMOUS PYGMY HORSES OF GRAND CANYON WILL BE SHOWN IN CITY

Discoverer of Tiny Animals to Tell Their History

The famous midget horses of the Grand Canyon—no larger than average sized dogs—will be exhibited in San Bernardino Friday and Saturday at 515 E street.

Discovered in an almost inaccessible valley in the Grand Canyon by Ernest W. Ritter, artist-explorer-naturalist, the tiny animals are recognized by scientists as real horses—not ponies.

The particular species of horse to which Mr. Ritter's discoveries belong is the result of generations of inbreeding and deprivation, and springs from perfectly normal animals belonging to Indian tribes which inhabited the hidden valley until a landslide cut it off from the outside world some 80 years ago.

Due to lack of water, semi-starvation, and complete lack of food containing calcium for bone structure, succeeding generations of the once normal-sized horses obeyed the inexorable law of nature that living things must adapt themselves somehow to whatever conditions they face, or else perish. They degenerated into the present pygmy equines, weighing but 30 to 65 pounds and requiring only small amounts of food and practically no water.

The dramatic story of the discovery of the origin of the old Indian fable about pygmy horses in the Grand Canyon, the tracing of the fable to a few ancient Indians who could still remember the approximate

location of the lost valley in which the horses were supposed to live, and the eventual rope descent into the canyon to capture and bring out the animals reads like fiction.

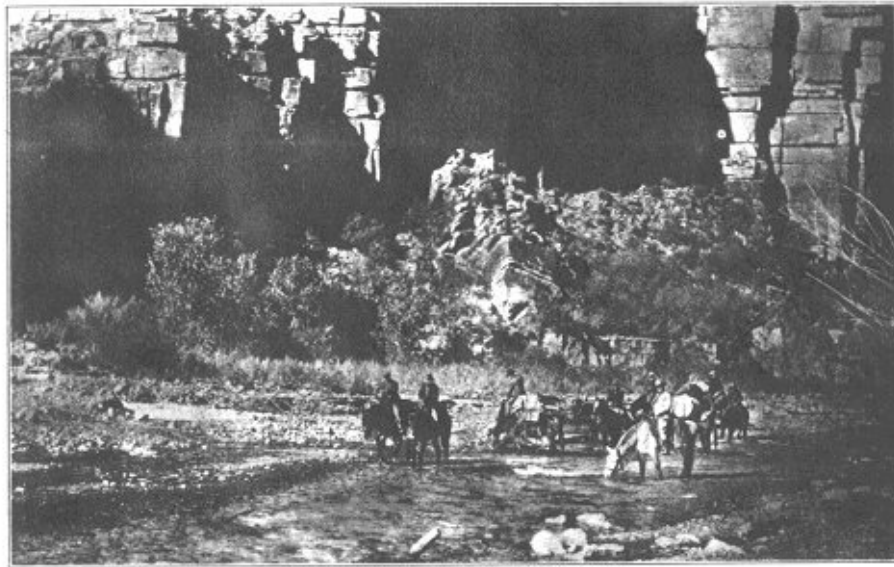
Mr. Ritter will be at the E street address to personally exhibit his tiny horses—the largest of which stands only 27 inches high—and to tell the dramatic tale of their discovery. The exhibit will be open from 9 a.m. until 9 p.m., both Friday and Saturday.

This story would seem to prove the legend of the Grand Canyon pygmy horses, and appeared in the *San Bernardino County Sun* on July 30, 1941. Information on Ritter and his pygmy horses was scarce aside from a few other newspaper articles detailing his putting of the equines on display. For all we know, he only claimed to get them from the Grand Canyon and was in fact showing off regular miniature horses.

However, even after Ritter's find, reports of tiny dwarf horses as small as rabbits persisted from the Grand Canyon! Anyhow, just as the *eohippus* led to dinosaurs in *The Valley of Gwangi*, we too will transition from the tiny horse to a possible remnant dinosaur via the famous dinosaur petroglyph of the nearby Hava Supai Canyon.

Though oft times mislabeled as a "T-Rex" there exists a dinosaurian petroglyph in Hava Supai Canyon in northern Arizona that looks very much like an Iguanodon. It was discovered by E. L. Doheny, a young prospector from Los Angeles, California. Doheny first visited the canyon in 1879 and returned in the fall of 1924 to better study the strange petroglyphs he had seen years earlier.

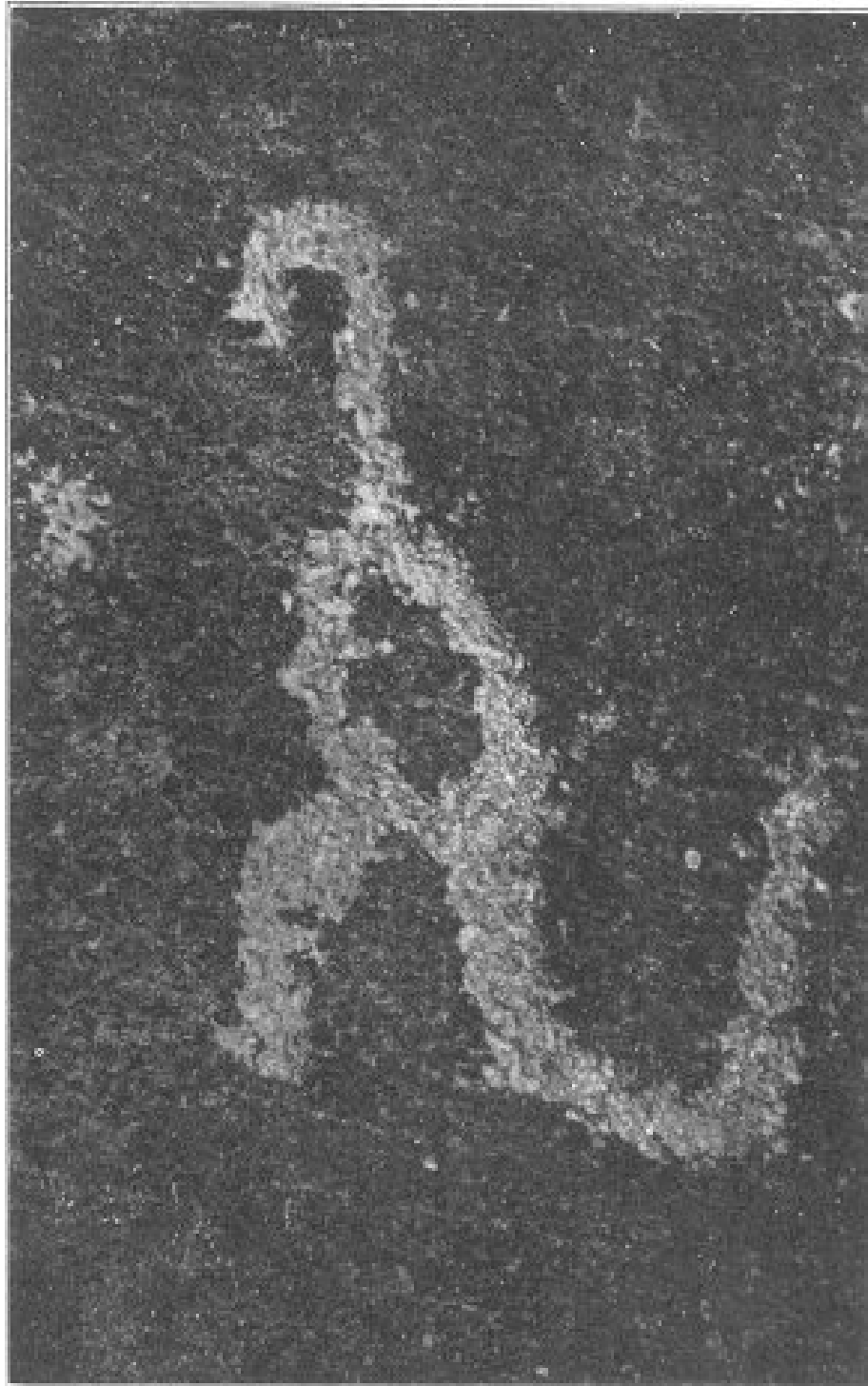
This was no ragtag expedition. The Doheny Expedition was led by none other than Samuel Hubbard, Honorary Curator of Archaeology with the Oakland Museum, in Oakland, California. Also along were Charles W. Gilmore, Curator of Vertebrate Paleontology with the United States National Museum, and a photographer, a sculptor, and several assistants.



The Doherty Scientific Expedition. "Hitting the Trail."

The trip was typical of a Western adventure, arriving near the Grand Canyon via the Santa Fe Railroad and then entering Hava Supai Canyon via mule pack-train. Though there were many pictographs to study the most puzzling seemed to present a dinosaur. The beast was of a bipedal stance and had a long neck, making it resemble either an Iguanodon or a Diplodocus, the duckbilled dinosaur. The pictograph, about a foot high and 7 inches wide. It was photographed and a cast was even made of the indentations on the rock wall.

Hubbard felt the creature most greatly resembled a Diplodocus and even included a drawing of a Diplodocus next to the pictograph in his official report. Though he was open-minded enough to entertain that Native Americans had somehow drawn a dinosaur, he still found it frustrating nonetheless. In his report he wrote, "The fact that some prehistoric man made a pictograph of a dinosaur on the walls of this canyon upsets completely all of our theories regarding the antiquity of man. Facts are stubborn and immutable things. If theories do not square with the facts then the theories must change, the facts remain."^[127]



After careful consideration, Hubbard deducted that whoever drew the beast must have seen it alive due to its being pictured standing upright. Helping add to the authenticity was the inclusion of other pictographs depicting current, non-extinct animals like goats and snakes within the same area.

Furthermore, not too far away on the edge of the Painted Desert, were found fossilized dinosaur tracks. This helped lend credibility to the fact that, regardless of when, dinosaurs had obviously walked the area in the past.

In his report, Hubbard offered the final interesting conclusion:

CONCLUSION

In conclusion we would like to point out that there are miles upon miles of this Grand Canyon region which no white man has ever seen. We have found enough to convince us that it is a veritable mine of archaeological treasures. There is enough in sight now to keep a party going for several seasons.

Not far from this “Fortress,” in the main Grand Canyon we found some “tracks” which even Mr. Gilmore himself was at a loss to explain. They were either in the red sandstone of the Carboniferous, where such tracks are not supposed to be, or they were impressed in the mud of a river channel at a later date. The Colorado river was at this level when the tracks were made. Since then it has kept on about its business and cut its gorge some 2500 feet deeper.



Ancient Fortress on Rim of Grand Canyon

The lapse of time as shown in this canyon is so tremendous that it is simply overwhelming. It makes our little year of 365 days seem trifling. Has not the time arrived when we must devise a new “unit of

measure” to block off these great “Periods of the Past?” Must we not readjust many of our ideas regarding the antiquity of man, and his contact with the prehistoric animals, which have gone, to return no more?

Perhaps if we can find out where we came from and what we came from, it may help us to get a little glimpse ahead along the “Trail of Life” we are now so painfully following. It may help us to solve the great riddle of the Universe: “Where do we go from here?”

The find very much perplexed the theologians of the time. The article, published in the *Beckley Sunday Register* on June 21, 1925, and presented below, is only one of many that were published after the find.

Apes and Men

All at once a monkey-wrench is thrown into the Darwinian controversy as a result of discoveries made by archeologists in California.

They have found on the wall of a rocky canyon a rude sketch of what seems plainly to be a living dinosaur, or giant lizard. Samuel Hubbard, curator of the natural history museum at Oakland, and director of the expedition, says the drawing indicates that the artist lived in the age of the dinosaur, which was perhaps 12,000,000 years ago, eons earlier than scientists have ever ventured to date the origin of man as an intelligent being.

Whatever your opinion on remnant dinosaurs may be, the dinosaur pictograph of Hava Supai canyon is set in stone, an inescapable question mark for the ages...

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John LeMay was born and raised in Roswell, New Mexico, famous for its 1947 UFO crash. He is a historian who has written over a dozen books, most of them on Southwestern history such as *Tall Tales and Half Truths of Billy the Kid*. He is the co-author/co-creator of *The Real Cowboys and Aliens* series with Noe Torres. Like the *Cowboys & Saurians* series, *The Real Cowboys and Aliens* explores UFO sightings and alien encounters of the Pioneer Period. LeMay is also a past president of the Historical Society for Southeast New Mexico and has written for magazines such as *Cinema Retro*, *True West*, *G-Fan*, *Mad Scientist* and *Xenorama*.

[1] That book also had a little chapter on the Tombstone Pterodactyl, our slant being that it could have flown through the Lordsburg Door, an alleged intergalactic portal in New Mexico. And technically you could call the pterodactyl a UFO if you wanted to...

[2] Not all these water beasts look like plesiosaurs, some look more like Zeuglodons, a type of prehistoric whale with a longer, snakelike body than today's whales.

[3] For those that want to learn more, I would suggest Roy Mackle's *Monsters of Loch Ness* which covers many theories on Nessie, including that it is actually a warm blooded mammal that just looks like a plesiosaur.

[4] The term for unknown animal.

[5] I also debated on just how many monster snake stories to include in this book, because there are tons of cowboys vs. monster snakes stories out there. However, though reptilian monsters, I decided giant snakes (in general at least) escaped the scope of this book. For newspaper articles on pioneers and giant snakes I heartily recommend Chad Arment's wonderful book *Boss Snakes*. The same goes for basic sea serpent sightings, all of which are similar. As such I decided to only include more unique sightings that tied into the West or the Pioneer Period in general.

[6] Yes, I know Apatosaurus is the better name to use, but most people are still more familiar with the brontosaurus name.

[7] Cox et. al, *Encyclopedia of Dinosaurs*, pp.105.

[8] Posthumously he even made it onto television. Actor Robert Bell played him in an episode of *Death Valley Days* in 1967.

[9] Weatherly, *Copper State Monsters*, pp.22-23.

[10] Lordsburg is home to its own fair share of phenomena. The best known is the Lordsburg Door, an alleged intergalactic portal in the sky. Furthermore, in *Chasing American Monsters* author Jason

Offutt writes that pterosaurs were seen in Lordsburg in the 1800s.

[11] As an aside, the men described the monster's legs like that of a horse. Now, does that mean it had hooves instead of claws? Unfortunately we don't know, but perhaps McClure meant to say that they were muscular like a horse's legs? Anyhow, like the newspaper accounts, McClure did say the two men described the monster's eyes as large as saucers.

[12] This account basically corroborates the one recounted by Hawley.

[13] This was fairly common at the time. For instance, to make it more story-like, Parrish gives the two ranchers dialogue, etc. to better flesh out the story.

[14] It was earlier retconned to 1886 by another writer.

[15] Parrish, "Our Country's Mysterious Monsters, *Old West*, pp.37.

[16] It should be noted that Thunderbird lore in general was the focus, and it wasn't just about the Tombstone story. For instance, Pearl writes of a mysterious commercial airline crash in the 1962 that he speculates could have been caused by a thunderbird.

[17] It's possible that Pearl got the year 1886 from another pterodactyl story, that of the Elizabeth Lake monster. An article ran on said creature in 1886 detailing a man shooting at the creature, though he didn't manage to kill it. This is unlikely though, as Pearl neglects to mention the Elizabeth Lake monster in his Thunderbird article.

[18] Despite his article's errors, Pearl's monster measurements (36 feet) oddly line up exactly with Harry McClure's more realistic testimony about what he heard from the two ranchers.

[19] Accessed from *Cryptozoology Anthology*, edited by Robert Deis.

[20] As to who Jack Pearl was, I can find scant information. It should be noted that Pearl did have an imagination, and wrote several sci-fi novels in the 1960s.

[21] Sanderson loaned his photo to his two friends Jay Blick and Frank Graves, who were hunting Thunderbirds in the Pennsylvania mountains in 1966. This would mean the photograph was lost before Sanderson could ever show it on television in the 1970s.

[22] Weatherly, *Copper State Monsters*, pp.24.

[23] Ibid.

[24] David Weatherly, author of *Copper State Monsters*, also claims to have seen the photo in a Men's Magazine of some sort in the 1950s. His description of the photo also lines up with Keel's description.

[25] However, this photo was never meant as an outright hoax. It was meant as a recreation for Fox TV's series *Freakylinks*. Today the same Thunderbird prop is in the care of the International Cryptozoology Museum in Maine.

[26] Bommersbach, "Tombstone's Flying Monster", <https://truestwestmagazine.com/tombstone-epitaph/>

[27] San Marcial was a small community in Socorro County founded around 1854 by Pascual Joyla. In 1920 a flood devastated the town and many residents left.

[28] Mackal, *A Living Dinosaur?*, pp.255.

[29] Mayor, *Fossil Legends*, pp.119-120.

[30] In fact, its name means “link crocodile”.

[31] Hembrillo Canyon is three miles long. Within it is the ruin of a fort supposedly built by Buffalo Soldiers during the Battle of Hembrillo Basin in 1880.

[32] Hazel Brookes, an area historian, reveals in her pamphlet, *Folklore Series No.11*, that there was another monster in the area too. This one didn’t match the description of the Crosswicks monster, and was a forty foot long snake as thick as a stove pipe. It was seen in Shaker Swamp west of Lebanon. Brookes notes that it was seen when the blueberries were ripe—implying this was just a “snaik story” created by the property owners to prevent folks from picking their berries.

[33] Earlier I made mention of a forty foot long water serpent in the area. Perhaps it actually was the same creature, seen only in the water, and thus witnesses didn’t even know that it had legs. Just a thought.

[34] An encouraging detail. Again, back then dinosaurs were depicted as tail draggers.

[35] This is where the 40 foot long snake monster was sighted.

[36] Sucik, “Dinosaur Sightings”, *Cryptozoology and the Investigation of Lesser Known Mystery Animals*, pp.138.

[37] Ibid, pp.141.

[38] Specifically, it was *Saurophagannax maximus*, a type of Allosaurus native only to Oklahoma.

[39] Jackson was also the one who invited the Yuchi to the Oklahoma Natural History Museum in 2000.

[40] The story just says he poisons the monster, it doesn’t say how exactly.

[41] Australians also have the tradition of the Kumi, a 12 foot lizard that lived in the hollow of a tree or among boulders.

[42] encyclopediaofarkansas.net/entries/gowrow-5669/

[43] Ibid.

[44] Presumably the ‘C’ in C.B. Webb stands for Cuthbert.

[45] But if it was so fat that it couldn’t leave its burrow, then how did he get it out?

[46] I have included the article in full for those who are interested. For those only interested in the Gowrow, skip ahead to the section entitled “Climbed 300 Feet”.

[47] A cryptid based more in folklore than in fact. It was said to be an amphibious big cat that killed livestock. It was most popular in the 1920s when this article was written.

[48] In the original story, Tom Brennan only lost a leg, he wasn’t killed. Unless Brennan later died from his injuries.

[49] Cook had arrived as part of the second Brigham Young Company in the fall of 1848 and had four wives total.

[50] I was just as shocked as you were to read this. If they were joking in poor taste or actually serious, I have no idea.

[51] Thanks to a restoration, the Iguanodon model can still be seen today at the Crystal Palace.

[52] That year a group of miners taking the Old Spanish Trail split up around what is today Enterprise, Utah. One group continued on the trail, while the other made the unwise decision to a “short cut” through the then unnamed Death Valley. These men would later be known as the “Lost 49ers” though they did eventually make it to their destination—just not all of them.

[53] A series of underground tunnels were discovered in 1931 by a Dr. F. Bruce Russell out on a mining venture. He discovered the mummies of three gigantic men over eight feet tall. In this same underground city he also claimed to find the bones of mammoths, sabretooth tigers, and dinosaurs...

[54] An unincorporated community located in San Bernardino County.

[55] This referring to a monster as the “8th wonder of the world” predates 1933’s *King Kong*.

[56] It was an inland lake referred to as Lake Manly which formed Death Valley during the middle of the Pleistocene era.

[57] In other words, if in 1892 people were still unaware that Iguanodons were bipeds this could have boosted the story’s credibility.

[58] To the best of my knowledge, only Jerome Clark has acknowledged the story’s existence.

[59] These pupfish became the world’s first endangered species as a matter of fact. It is one of the rarest species of fish in the world and only one hundred or so exist at a time within Devil’s Hole, again, the only place in the world where they are found.

[60] Devil’s Hole was also home to what Native Americans called “Water Babies”. Today, we might compare these creatures with the species of extraterrestrial identified as the Greys. Water Babies were called such because they had short, small bodies with large heads. They also liked to abduct people and drag them into the water.

[61] Though oft times mislabeled as a “T-Rex” there exists a dinosaurian petroglyph in Hava Supai Canyon in northern Arizona that looks very much like an Iguanodon.

[62] *American Poland-China Record*, Volume 53, pp.458.

[63] The Mothman was a strange, winged being seen in the Point Pleasant, West Virginia area in the late 1960s. It is itself sometimes believed to have been a remnant pterodactyl.

[64] The story is so similar to the 1956 Japanese giant monster movie *Rodan* (about a mutated pteranodon) that it’s downright uncanny. In the film, a mysterious UFO is spotted in the air. The Japanese eventually deduct that it is a monstrous pterosaur which emerged from a Kyushu mine. Not only that—in a surprise reveal late in the film—it is revealed that there are actually two monsters.

[65] In the first article the name is Mather & Gregg’s, a minor typo.

[66] Yes, in the other article it is spelled Alcott, but this one chooses to spell it Olcott.

[67] The previous article gave no mention of Alcott noticing a smell. Only the witness named O.V. White mentioned a horrible smell. Overall, this corroboration is encouraging.

[68] This article doesn't imply that White fainted as the previous one did.

[69] That he was the school principal is a new detail not mentioned in the previous article.

[70] This is an antiquated but accepted older spelling for diverse, by the way.

[71] Antediluvian being an older term for ancient that is rarely used today.

[72] www.desmoinesregister.com/story/news/2015/07/01/van-meter-remembers-1903-visit-from-winged-monster/29583469/

[73] I could find no record of these men's existence.

[74] It had a few traits akin to a Triceratops I suppose, but that's it.

[75] I am actually incorrect in calling this creature a "wyrms", since wyrms were dragons lacking wings or limbs of any kind. This chapter title was inspired by the Bram Stoker novel *The Lair of the White Worm*, written two years after this dragon story in 1911.

[76] On the note of prospectors, gold was discovered in San Gabriel Canyon in 1854. From this discovery sprang a town called El Doradoville at the fork of the San Gabriel River. Though the town of El Doradoville was destroyed by flood waters in 1862, prospectors still frequented the area, and in this case, saw a monster.

[77] Trying to find records of Harry Morse and Bill Brown was challenging because a famous Sheriff, also named Harry Morse, arrested the bandit Tiburcio Vasquez in San Gabriel. I highly doubt Harry Morse the ferryman and Sheriff Harry Morse were one and the same. Furthermore, I could find no record of a spot called Austin's Crossing.

[78] Records published in the 1903 edition of *N.A.R.D. Notes: Journal of the National Association of Retail Druggists, Volume 2*, prove that this is true.

[79] This too is odd, as the *Hagerstown Mail* article was printed in August, not October.

[80] Sullivan, "Piso's Trio", 2007. https://www.fohbc.org/PDF_Files/PisoPrior_JSullivan.pdf [81]
Coffey, *Kentucky Cryptids*, pp. 149-150.

[82] Coleman and Huyghe, *Lake Monsters and Sea Serpents*, pp.152.

[83] I could find no records of the three men, though this certainly does not mean that they didn't exist. There was, coincidentally, a famous Pennsylvania beer maker named Charles Engel, but he was born in 1811 and would not be identified as a "young man". He was also well known enough that the paper would have surely mentioned his profession.

[84] An old neighborhood in northern Philadelphia.

[85] Years later skeptics claimed it was merely a baleen whale.

[86] Coleman, *Mysterious America*, pp.30.

[87] See Chapter 9 on the Van Meter Monster for another smelly pterodactyl tale. As they say, the devil is in the details...

[88] Introduced in Chapter 1 of this book, go back and read it if you are skipping around out of sequence.

[89] Bell, *On the Old West Coast*, pp.199.

[90] Ibid.

[91] This California *bandido* was such a celebrity he sold photographs of himself from his jail cell (mostly to enamored women) to pay his legal fees. As he later stepped onto the gallows to be hung he stated, “*Pronto.*” The Vasquez Rocks north of Los Angeles are named for him.

[92] In a footnote, Bell said that Elizabeth Lake often gave off an awful smell and implied that he too had experienced it.

[93] Bell, *On the Old West Coast*, pp.201.

[94] Ibid, pp.202.

[95] It is ironic to note that, since the monster is believed to have been killed in Tombstone in 1890, Leonis himself died in 1889 in a strange wagon accident. Today he and his wife’s ghost still haunts the Leonis Adobe in Calabasas.

[96] Note, that once again, though it has no similarities to a python the paper again likens the pterodactyl to a snake!

[97] Bell, *On the Old West Coast*, pp.202-204.

[98] Ibid, pp.205-206.

[99] Ibid, pp.206.

[100] This is presumably a reference to the Ohio River Monster covered in Chapter 19 of this book.

[101] As a historical footnote, on July 25, 1806, Lewis and Clark discovered what was likely a dinosaur bone at what is today Pompey’s Pillar National Monument.

[102] Bartlett, *Yellowstone: A Wilderness Besieged*, pp.244.

[103] I was able to confirm the existence of Clark Hosier (b.1839) in the book *History of Henry County, Indiana*. On page 645 it says of him that, “Mr. Hosier has always followed agricultural pursuits and now owns a fine farm of 800 acres all well improved.”

[104] Simon Titus Powell (b.1821) was also real. He served as Deputy County clerk from 1842 to 1855.

[105] Initially the article describes it as seven to eight feet long. We only run into trouble when they claim it was double that length upon examining the dead body. Perhaps it was an exaggeration?

[106] Hand, “Sea Serpents in the Ohio River”, <https://www.cincinnatiimagazine.com/citywiseblog/sea-serpents-ohio-river-cincinnati-monsters/>

[107] “A Strange Animal.” *Atlanta Constitution*, 2-11-1895.

[108] A later article from the *Oakland Tribune* on August 8th (“The Animals. Splayfooted Monsters of Fresno.”) referenced this sighting but said that the party was returning from a dance.

[109] The *Oakland Tribune* article from August 8th poked fun at this by writing: “The theory that this was the impression of a Fresno girl’s foot is rejected by Professor Snodgrass, although his reasoning is not at all conclusive on this point.”

[110] Wild Man, of course, is an antiquated term for Bigfoot or Sasquatch.

[111] <http://www.ropens.com/dragons/>

[112] As an aside, when I searched “Lewistown monster” online I found a Bigfoot sighting there recorded in the *Fulton County Democrat* on October 23, 1968. Otherwise, there were no results concerning monsters in that area.

[113] Some of you probably no doubt scratched your head at the fact that this monster was apparently a milk drinker. This actually is not odd, as there are quite a few snake stories where snakes would suckle milk from horrified cows. So the fact that the monster went for the milk was not the least bit surprising.

[114] It never occurred to me until I read the following story that some of the odder “flying snake” stories might in fact have been giant dragonfly sightings. Of course, some of the more detailed stories made it clear these were indeed snakes with wings, but others, if examined more closely, might actually point to a *Meganeura*!

[115] Mayor, *Fossil Legends*, pp.279.

[116] I did my best to find articles on this story but could find none.

[117] From the word *ossify*, meaning “turn into bone or bony tissue.”

[118] Or, Crazy Buffalo, also the son of *Unktehi*, the water monster.

[119] Mayor, *Fossil Legends*, pp.254.

[120] The tracks of the alleged Fresno Dragons of 1891 were also five toed, while pterodactyls should have only four digits.

[121] It should be noted, though, that the crocodile monster with the head of a horse was said to be an invention to compete with the Bear Lake Monster.

[122] Grand Canyon Pioneers Society newsletter, February 1990.

http://www.grandcanyonhistory.org/Publications/EarlyPubs/Newsletter_Feb_1990.pdf [123]

Furthermore, horses the size of small dogs were said to be sighted around the Great Salt Lake in Utah around the same time as the alleged 1903 pterodactyl sighting.

[124] library.nau.edu/speccoll/exhibits/lauzon/pages/grandcanyon2.htm [125] Ibid.

[126] Ibid.

[127] Hubbard, *Discoveries Relating to Prehistoric Man*, pp.5.